IN THOSE DAYS

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THE STORY OF AN OLD MAN

BY

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PHILADELPHIA

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IN THOSE DAYS

THE STORY OF AN OLD MAN

I

When the time drew near for Samuel the Beadle to let his son begin his term of military service, he betook himself to the market, purchased a regulation shirt, a knapsack, and a few other things needed by a soldier—and he did not forget the main item: he ran and fetched a bottle of liquor. Then he went home.

And there, in the presence of his neighbors, of whom I had the privilege of being one, he drank a glassful to "long life," and offered another to Rebekah, his good wife.

"Drink, madam," said he, merrily. At this Rebekah turned up her nose, as if ready to blurt out with, "How often have you seen me drink liquor?"

Indeed, it was an affront which she would not have passed over in silence at any other time, but she had no heart for an open quarrel just then, when about to part with her son, and was satisfied with a silent refusal.

"Woman," said Samuel, angrily, "take it, and do as you are told!" But Rebekah was not impressed by his angry tone, for in fact Samuel was an easy "lord and master." As to his loudness, it was but part of an old habit of his, dating from the days of his own military service, to bully his inferiors and to let those above him in authority bully him.

"So are they all of his kind," she would often explain to her neighbors. "They just fuss, to blow off their tempers, and then—one may sit on them."

Rebekah persisted in her refusal, and Samuel began in a softer tone:

"But why does it worry you so much?

Woman, woman, it is not to Shemad, God forbid, that he is going!"

At the mention of conversion, Rebekah burst into tears, for Samuel had unintentionally touched her sore spot: there were rumors in the town that her family was not without blemish.

"Now that you are crying," exclaimed Samuel, thoroughly angry, "you are not only hard-headed, but also silly, simply silly! 'Long of hair but short of sense.' To cry and cry, and not know wherefore!" With this Samuel turned towards us, and began to plead his case.

"Have you ever seen such a cry-baby? Five times in her life she filled the world with a hue and cry, when she bore me a child, and every time it was but an empty bubble: five girls she brought me! Then, beginning with the sixth birth, she was fortunate enough to get boys, the real thing. Three sons she gave me as my

old age was approaching. And now, when she ought to thank Heaven for having been found worthy of raising a soldier for the army, she cries! Think of it—your son enters the army a free man; but I, in my time,—well, well, I was taken by force when a mere youngster!"

Here the old man settled his account with the bottle, and took leave of his crying wife and his good neighbors, and in the company of his son mounted the coach waiting outside, ready to go to H., the capital of the district, where the recruits had to report.

By special good fortune I was going to H. by the same coach, and so I came to hear the story of old Samuel's life from the beginning till that day.

It was the rainy season; the roads were muddy, and the horses moved with difficulty. The driver made frequent stops, and whenever the road showed the slightest inclination to go

uphill he would intimate that it might be well for us to dismount and walk behind the coach a little.

The cold drizzle penetrated to our very skin and made our flesh creep. The warmth we had brought with us from the house was evaporating, and with it went the merry humor of the old man. He began to contemplate his son, who sat opposite to him, looking him over up and down.

The wise "lord and master," who had tried to instruct his wife at home and celebrate the fact of her having reared a soldier for the army, he failed himself to stand the trial: he began to feel the pangs of longing and lonesomeness. The imminent parting with his son, to take place on the morrow, seemed to depress him greatly.

Bent and silent he sat, and one could see that he was lost in a maze of thoughts and emotions,

which came crowding in upon him in spite of himself.

I took a seat opposite to him, so that I might enter into conversation with him.

"Do you remember all that happened to you in those days?" I asked by way of starting the conversation.

He seemed to welcome my question. In that hour of trial the old man was eager to unload his bosom, to share his thoughts with some one, and return mentally to all the landmarks of his own life, till he reached the period corresponding to that into which he was introducing his son. The old man took out his well-beloved short pipe. According to his story it had been a present from his superior officer, and it had served him ever since. He filled the pipe, struck a match, and was enveloped in smoke.

II

You ask me whether I remember everything —he began from behind the smoke. Why, I see it all as if it had happened yesterday. I do not know exactly how old I was then. I remember only that my brother Solomon became a Bar-Mitzwah at that time. Then there was Dovidl, another brother, younger than Solomon, but older than myself; but he had died before that time. I must have been about eleven years old.

Just then the mothers fell a-worrying: a Catcher was coming to town. According to some he had already arrived.

At the Heder the boys were telling one another that the Catcher was a monster, who caught boys, made soldiers out of them, and turned them over to the Government, in place of the Jewish grown-ups that were unwilling and unable to serve. And the boys were divided

in their opinions: some said that the Catcher was a demon, one of those who had been created at twilight on the eve of the Sabbath. Others said that he was simply a "heathen," and some others, that he was an "apostate." Then, there were some who asserted that he was merely a bad Jew, though a learned one nevertheless;—that he wore the regular Jewish costume, the long coat and the broad waistband, and had the Tallis-Koton on his breast, so that the curse of the righteous could not hurt him. According to rumor, he was in the habit of distributing nuts and candy among Jewish boys; and if any one tasted of them, he could not move from the spot, until the Catcher put his hand on him and "caught" him. I happened to overhear a conversation between father and mother, and I gathered from it that I need not fear the Catcher.

It was a Saturday night, soon after the death

of my elder brother Dovidl, within the period of the thirty days' mourning for him. Mother would not be consoled, for Dovidl had been her "very best."

Three brothers had I. The first-born, Simhah, may he rest in peace, had been married long before; he was the junior Shohet in town, and a candidate for the Rabbinate. Solomon was more learned in the Torah, young though he was, peace be unto him. . . . Well, they are now in the world-of-truth, in the world-to-come, both of them. But Dovidl, had he lived, would have excelled them both. That is the way of the Angel of Death, he chooses the very best. As to myself—why deny it?—I was a dullard. Somehow my soul was not attuned to the Torah.

As I said, mother was uttering complaints against Heaven, always crying. Yes, in the matter of tears they are experts. I have pondered over it, and have found it out: fish

were created out of the mud-puddle, and woman out of tears. Father used to scold her mightily, but she did not mind it; and she never ceased bemoaning Dovidl and crying unto Heaven, "who gave the Angel of Death power over him."

On that night after the Sabbath, when father had extinguished the taper in the dregs of the Havdolah cup, he turned to mother, and said: "Now man born of woman is unwise all his life long. He knows not how to thank for the sorrows that have been sweetened by His mercy, blessed be He!"

Mother did not understand, and looked at father questioningly. "The Catcher is in town," explained father.

"The Catcher!" shuddered mother.

"But he takes only Fourths and upwards," said father, reassuringly.

Fourths, Fifths, etc., those households were called which had four, or five, or more sons.

"And our household has only three sons at present," continued father. "Do you understand, woman? Three sons were left to us, and our household is exempt from military duty. Now do you see the mercy of the Lord, blessed be He? Do you still murmur against Him, blessed be He?"—

So it was in those days. Every Jewish community had to deliver a certain fixed number of recruits to the Government annually. This number was apportioned among the families, and every family taxed the households composing it. But not every household had to supply a recruit. A household with a large number of sons secured the exemption of a household with fewer sons. For instance, a household with four sons in it was exempted, if there was a household with five sons to levy from in the same family. And a household of three sons was spared when there was, in the

same family, a household of four sons. And so forth.—

And as father was speaking—the old man continued—mother contemplated us, as one that escapes from a fire contemplates the saved remnants; and her eyes overflowed with silent tears. Those were the last tears shed over the grave of Dovidl, and for those tears father had no rebuke. We felt that Dovidl was a saint: he had departed this life to save us from the hand of the Catcher. It seemed to me that the soul of Dovidl was flitting about the room, listening to everything, and noticing that we were pleased that he had died; and I felt ashamed.

The next day I went to the Heder, somewhat proud of myself. I boasted before my mates that I was a Third. The Fourths envied me; the Fifths envied the Fourths, and all of us envied the Seconds and the only sons.

So little chaps, youngsters who knew not what their life was going to be, came to know early that brothers, sons of one father, may at times be a source of trouble to one another.

That was at the beginning of the summer.

The teachers decided that we remain within the walls of the Heder most of the time, and show ourselves outside as little as possible during the period of danger. But a decree like that was more than boys could stand, especially in those beautiful summer days.

Meanwhile the Catcher came to town, and set his eye on the son-in-law of the rich Reb Yossel, peace be unto him. The name of the young man was Avremel Hourvitz—a fine, genteel young man. He had run away from his home in Poland and come to our town, and was spending his time at the Klaus studying the Torah. And Reb Yossel, may he rest in peace, had to spend a pile of money before he got

Avremel for his daughter. From the same Polish town came the Catcher, to take Avremel as the recruit of the family Hourvitz due to the Jewish community of his city. When he laid his hand on Avremel, the town was shocked. The rabbi himself sent for the Catcher, and promised to let him have, without any contention, some one else instead of Avremel. Then they began to look for a household with the family name of Hourvitz, and they found my father's. Before that happened I had never suspected that my father had anything like a family name. For some time the deal remained a deep secret. But no secret is proof against a mother's intuition, and mother scented the thing. She caught me by the arm—I do not know why she picked me out—rushed with me to the rabbi, and made it hot for him.

"Is this justice, rabbi? Did I bear and rear children, only to give up my son for the sake of some Avremel?!"

The rabbi sighed, cast down his eyes, and argued, that said Avremel was not simply "an Avremel," but a "veritable jewel," a profound Lamdan, a noble-hearted man, destined to become great in Israel. It was unjust to give him away, when there was someone else to take his place. Besides, Avremel was a married man, and the father of an infant child. "Now where is justice?" demanded the rabbi. But mother persisted. For all she knew, her own sons might yet grow up to become ornaments to Israel . . . And she, too, was observing the ordinances of the Hallah and the Sabbath candles, and the rest of the laws, no less than Avremel's mother.

More arguments, more tears without arguments—till the rabbi softened: he could not resist a woman. Then mother took me and Solomon up to the garret, and ordered us not to venture outside.—

Here the old man interrupted himself by a soft sigh, and continued:—

To a great extent it was my own fault, wild boy that I was. I broke my mother's injunction. In the alley, near the house of my parents, there lived a wine-dealer, Bendet by name. Good wine was to be found in his cellar. For this reason army officers and other persons of rank frequented his place, and he was somewhat of a favorite with them. In short, though he lived in a mean little alley, those important personages were not averse to calling at his house. That Bendet had an only child, a daughter. She was considered beautiful and educated. I had not known her. In my day they spoke ill of her. Naturally, her father loved her. Is there a father who loves not his offspring? And how much more such a daughter, whom everyone loved. However that may be, one day Bendet's daughter broke

away, left her father's house, and renounced her faith—may we be spared such a fate! And many years after her father's death she returned to our town, to take possession of her portion of the inheritance. That happened at the time when we were hiding in the garret. The town was all agog: people ran from every street to get a look at the renegade, who came to take possession of a Jewish inheritance. I, too, was seized with a wild desire to get a look at her, to curse her, to spit in her face And I forgot all the dangers that surrounded me.

Young as I was, I considered myself as a Jew responsible for the wayward one. I lost control of myself, and ran out. But after I had been in the street for some time, I was seized with fear of the Catcher. Every stranger I met seemed to me to be a Catcher. I shrank into myself, walked unsteadily hither and

thither, and did not know how to hide myself. Then a man met me. His large beard and curled side-locks made me think he was a good man. I looked at him imploringly. "What ails you, my boy?" he asked in a soft tone. "I am afraid of the Catcher," said I, tearfully.

"Whose son are you?"

I told him.

"Then come with me, and I shall hide you, my boy. Don't be afraid. I am your uncle. Don't you recognize me?"

He took me by the arm, and I went after him. Then I noticed that the children of my neighborhood were eyeing me terror-stricken. The womenfolk saw me, wrung their hands, and lamented aloud.

"What are they crying about?" I wondered.

"Do you want some candy? Your uncle has plenty of it," said he, bending over me, as if to protect me. "Or maybe your feet hurt you?

Let your uncle take you on his arms." As soon as I heard " candy," I felt that the man was the Catcher himself, and I tried to break away. But the " uncle " held me fast. Then I began to yell. It was near our house, and the people of our alley rushed towards us, some yelling, some crying, some armed with sticks. Pretty soon I recognized my mother's voice in the mixture of voices and noises. You see, peculiar is the charm of a mother's voice: a knife may be held to one's throat, but the mere sound of mother's voice awakens new courage and begets new hope. Mother made a way for herself, and fell upon the Catcher like a wild beast. She struck, she pinched, she scratched, she pulled his hair, she bit him. But what can a woman do in the line of beating? Nothing! Her neighbors joined her, one, two, three; and all tried hard to take me out of the hands of the Catcher. What can a few women do against

one able-bodied man? Nothing at all! That happened during the dinner hour. One of our neighbors got the best of the Catcher, a woman who happened rather to dislike me and my mother; they quarreled frequently. Perhaps on account of this very dislike she was not over-excited, and was able to hit upon the right course to take at the critical moment. She went to her house, took in one hand a potful of roasted groats, ready for dinner, and in the other a kettle of boiling water. Unnoticed she approached the Catcher, spilled the hot groats upon his hands, and at the same time she poured the boiling water over them. A wild yell escaped from the mouth of the Catcher—and I was free.—

There was no more tobacco in the pipe, and the old man lost his speech. That was the way of Samuel the Beadle; he could tell his story only from behind the smoke of his pipe, when he

did not see his hearers, nor his hearers saw him. In that way he found it easy to put his boyhood before his mind's eye and conjure up the reminiscences of those days. Meanwhile the horses had stopped, and let us know that a high and steep hill was ahead of us, and that it was our turn to trudge through the mud. We had to submit to the will of the animals, and we dismounted.

III

After tramping a while alongside the coach, the old man lit his pipe, emitted a cloud of smoke, and continued:—

I do not know what happened then. I cannot tell who caught me, nor the place I was taken to. I must have been in a trance all the while.

When I awoke, I found myself surrounded by a flock of sheep, in a meadow near the woods. Near me was my brother Solomon; but I hardly

recognized him. He wore peasant clothes: a linen shirt turned out over linen breeches and gathered in by a broad belt. I was eyeing my brother, and he was eyeing me, both of us equally bewildered, for I was disguised like himself.

A little boy, a real peasant boy, was standing near us. He smiled at us in a good-natured, hospitable way. It was the chore-boy of the Jewish quarter. On the Sabbaths of the winter months he kept up the fires in the Jewish houses; that is why he could jabber a few words of Yiddish. During the summer he took care of the flocks of the peasants that lived in the neighborhood.

When I awoke, my mother was with us too. She kissed us amid tears, gave us some bread and salt, and, departing, strictly forbade us to speak any Yiddish. "For God's sake, speak no Yiddish," said she, "you might be recognized! Hide here till the Catcher leaves town."

It was easy enough to say, "Speak no Yiddish"; but did we know how to speak any other language?

I saw then that I was in a sort of hiding-place —a hiding-place under the open sky! I realized that I had escaped from houses, garrets, and cellars, merely to hide in the open field between heaven and earth. I had fled from darkness, to hide in broad daylight!

Indeed, it was not light that I had to fear. Nor was it the sun, the moon, or the sheep. It was only man that I had to avoid.

Mother went away and left us under the protection of the little shepherd boy. And he was a good boy, indeed. He watched us to the best of his ability. As soon as he saw any one approach our place, he called out loudly: "No, no; these boys are not Jewish boys at all! On my life, they are not!"

As a matter of fact, a stranger did happen to

visit our place; but he was only a butcher, who came to buy sheep for slaughtering.

Well, the sun had set, and night came. It was my first night under the open sky. I suffered greatly from fear, for there was no Mezuzah anywhere near me. I put my hand under my Shaatnez clothes, and felt my Tzitzis: they, too, seemed to be in hiding, for they shook in my hand.

Over us the dark night sky was spread out, and it seemed to me that the stars were so many omens whose meaning I could not make out. But I felt certain that they meant nothing good so far as I was concerned. All kinds of whispers, sizzling sounds of the night, reached my ears, and I knew not where they came from.

Looking down, I saw sparks a-twinkling. I knew they were stars reflected in the near-by stream. But soon I thought it was not the

water and the stars: the sheen of the water became the broad smile of some giant stretched out flat upon the ground; and the sparks were the twinkling of his eyes. And the sheep were not sheep at all, but some strange creatures moving to and fro, spreading out, and coming together again in knotted masses. I imagined they all were giants bewitched to appear as sheep by day and to become giants again by night. Then I knew too well that the thick, dark forest was behind me; and what doesn't one find in a forest? Is there an unholy spirit that cannot be found there? Z-z-z- - - - a sudden sizzling whisper reached my ear, and I began to cry.

"Why don't you sleep?" asked the shepherd boy in his broken Yiddish.

"I am afraid!"

"What are you afraid of?"

"Of—of—the woods"

"Ha—ha—ha—I have good dogs with the flock!"

I wanted a Mezuzah, some talisman, a protection against evil spirits, and that fool offered me barking dogs! All at once he whistled loudly, and his dogs set up a barking that nearly made me deaf. The flock was panic-stricken. I thought at first that the earth had opened her mouth, and packs of dogs were breaking out from hell.

The noise the dogs made broke the awful hush of the night, and my fears were somewhat dispelled.

But there were other reasons why I liked to hear the dogs bark. I was myself the owner of a dog, which I had raised on the sly in my father's house. Imagine the horror of my brother Solomon, who as a real Jewish lad was very much afraid of a dog!

In that way we spent a few days, hiding under

the open sky, disguised in our Shaatnez clothes. Soon enough the time came when my parents *had* to understand what they would not understand when the rabbi wanted to give me up in place of the famous Avremel. For they caught my oldest brother Simhah, may he rest in peace. And Simhah was a privileged person; he was not only the Shohet of the community and a great Lamdan, but also a married man, and the father of four children to boot. Only then, it seems, my parents understood what the rabbi had understood before: that it was not fair to deliver up my brother when I, the ignorant fellow, the lover of dogs, might take his place. A few days later mother came and took us home. As to the rest, others had seen to it.—

Here the old man stopped for a while. He was puffing and snorting, tired from the hard walk uphill. Having reached the summit, he turned around, looked downhill, straightened

up, and took a deep breath. "This is an excellent way of getting rid of your tired feeling," said he. "Turn around and look downhill: then your strength will return to you."—

IV

We had left the coach far behind, and had to wait till it overtook us. Meanwhile I looked downhill into the valley below: it was a veritable sea of slush. The teams that followed ours sank into it, and seemed not to be moving at all. The oblique rays of the setting sun, reflected and radiating in every direction, lent a peculiar glitter to the slushy wagons and the broken sheet of mire, as if pointing out their beauty to the darkening sky. So much light wasted, I thought. But on the summit of the hill on which I was standing, the direct rays of the sun promised a good hour more of daylight.

The old man drew breath, and continued his story:—

Well, I was caught, and put into prison. I was not alone. Many young boys had been brought there. Some were crying bitterly; some looked at their companions wonderingly. We were told that the next day we should be taken away to some place, and that the rabbi wished to come to see us, but was not permitted to enter our prison.

Yes, a good man was the rabbi, may he rest in peace; yet he was compelled to cheat for once. And when an honest man is compelled to cheat he may outdo the cleverest crook. Do you want to know what the rabbi did? He disguised himself as a peasant, went out, and walked the streets with the rolling gait of a drunkard. The night guards stopped him, and asked him what his business was. "I am a thief," said the rabbi. Then the guards

arrested him, and put him into the prison with us.

In the darkness of that night the rabbi never ceased talking to us, swallowing his own tears all the while. He told us the story of Joseph the righteous. It had been decreed in Heaven, said the rabbi, that his brethren should sell Joseph into slavery. And it was the will of the Almighty that Joseph should come to Egypt, to show the Egyptians that there is only one God in Heaven, and that the Children of Israel are the chosen people.

Then the rabbi examined us: Did we know our Modeh-Ani by heart? Did we know our Shema?

He told us that we should be taken very, very far away, that we should be away many, many years, and should become soldiers when grown up. Then he warned us never to eat of any food forbidden by the Jewish law, and never

to forget the God of Israel and our own people, even if they tore our flesh with thorns. He told us also the story of the Ten Martyrs, who sacrificed their lives to sanctify the God of Israel. He told us of the mother and her seven children that were killed for having refused to bow before idols; and he told us many more such things. All those saints and martyrs, he said, are now in Paradise, enjoying the bliss of the Divine Presence. That night I really envied those saints; I longed with all my heart to be forced to bow to idols, to have to withstand all sorts of trials, so as to enjoy, after my death, the bliss of the Divine Presence in Paradise.

Many more stories the rabbi told us; many more words of warning, encouragement, and praise came from his lips, till I really believed I was the one whom God had picked out from among my equals, to be put through great trials and temptations. . . .

Morning came, and the guard entered the prison. Then the rabbi turned towards us, and said: "Lambs of the God of Israel, we have to part now: I am going to be lashed and imprisoned for having entered this place by a trick, and you will be taken into exile, to undergo your trials! I may hardly expect to be found worthy of surviving till you return. But there, in the world-of-truth, we shall surely meet. May it be the will of God that I may have no reason to be ashamed of you there, before Him and His angels, in Heaven!"

We parted, and the words of the rabbi sank deep into my heart.

Then they began dumping us into wagons. The obstreperous boys, who tried to run away, were many of them bound with ropes and thrown into the wagon. Of course, we all howled.

I did not hear my own voice, nor the voice of

my neighbor. It was all one great howl. A crowd of men and women followed our wagon —the parents of the boys. Very likely they cried, too; but we could not hear their voices. The town, the fields, heaven and earth, seemed to cry with us.

I caught sight of my parents, and my heart was filled with something like anger and hatred. I felt that I had been sacrificed for my brother.

My mother, among many other mothers, approached the wagon, looked at me, and apparently read my thoughts: she fainted away, and fell to the ground. The accident held up the crowd, which busied itself with reviving my mother, while our wagon rolled away.

My heart was filled with a mixture of anger, pity, and terror. In that mood of mixed feelings I parted from my parents.

We cried and cried, got tired, and finally became still from sheer exhaustion. Presently a

noise reached our ears, something like the yelling of children. We thought it was another wagonload of boys like ourselves. But soon we found out our mistake: it was but a wagonload of sheep that were being taken to slaughter. . . .

Of course, we ate nothing the whole of that day, though the mothers had not failed to provide us with food. Meanwhile the sun had set; it got dark, and the boys, who had been bound with ropes, were released by the guard: he knew they would not attempt to escape at that time. We fell asleep, but every now and then one of the boys would wake up, crying, quietly at first, then louder and louder. Then another would join him; one more, and yet one more, till we all were yelling in chorus, filling the night air with our bitter cries. Even the guard could not stand it; he scolded us, and belabored us with his whip. That crying of ours

reminds me of what we read in Lamentations: "Weeping she hath wept in the night. . . ."

Morning came, and found us all awake: we were waiting for daylight. We believed it would bring us freedom, that angels would descend from Heaven, just as they had descended to our father Jacob, to smite our guard and set us free. At the same time, the rising sun brought us all a feeling of hunger. We began to sigh, each and every one of us separately. But the noise we made did not amount even to the barking of a few dogs or the cawing of a few crows. That is what hunger can do. And when the guard had distributed among us some of the food we had brought with us, we ate it with relish, and felt satisfied. At the same time we began to feel the discomfort we were causing one another, cooped up as we were in the wagon. I began to complain of my neighbor, who was sitting on my legs. He

claimed that I was pressing against him with my shoulder. We all began to look up to the guard, as if expecting that he could or would prevent us from torturing one another.

Still I had some fun even on that day of weeping. I happened to turn around, and I noticed that Barker, my dog, was running after our wagon.

"Too bad, foolish Barker," said I, laughing at him in spite of my heartache. "Do you think I am going to a feast? It is into exile that I am going: and what do you run after me for?"—

This made old Samuel laugh; he laughed like a child, as if the thing had just happened before his eyes, and as if it were really comical. Meanwhile our coach had reached the top of the hill: we jumped into our seats, and proceeded to make one another uncomfortable.

The old man glanced at his son, who was

sitting opposite to him. It was a loving and tender look, issuing from under long shaggy eyebrows, a beautiful, gentle, almost motherly look, out of accord with the hard-set face of an irritable and stern father.

The old man made his son's seat comfortable for him, and then fell silent.

V

I am going to pass over a long time—resumed the old man later. There was much traveling and many stops; much tramping on foot, with legs swollen; but all that has nothing to do with the subject.

Once in a while our guard would get angry at us, curse us bitterly, and strike us with his whip. "You cursed Jews," he would say, "do I owe you anything that I should suffer so much on your account, and undergo all the hardships of travel?"

Indeed, there was a good deal of truth in what he said. For, willingly or unwillingly, we did give him much trouble. Had we died, say the year before, or even at that very moment, he would not have been put to the necessity of leading a crowd of half-dumb boys. He would not have had to stand the hardships of travel, and would not have been compelled to listen to the wailings of children torn from the arms of their parents. Or do you think it is agreeable to feel that little children consider you a hard and cruel man? When I grew up and served in the army myself, and had people below me in age and position under my command, I came to understand the troubles of our guard; so that now, after having gone through many experiences, after I have passed, as they say, through fire and water, I may confess that I bear no malice towards all those at whose hands I suffered. There are many ex-Canton-

ists who cannot forget the birch-rod, for instance. Well, so much is true: for every misstep, for every sign of disobedience a whipping was due. If one of us refused to kneel in prayer before the crucifix; if one of us refused to eat pork; if one of us was caught mumbling a Hebrew prayer or speaking Yiddish, he was sure to get a flogging. Twenty, thirty, forty, or even full fifty lashes were the punishment. But, then, is it conceivable that they could have treated us any other way? Why, hundreds of Jewish children that did not understand a word of Russian had been delivered into the hands of a Russian official that did not understand a word of Yiddish. He would say, Take off my boots, and the boy would wash his hands. He would say, Sit down, and the boy would stand up. Were we not like dumb cattle? It was only the rod that we understood well. And the rod taught us to understand our master's orders by the mere expression of his eyes.

Then many of the ex-Cantonists still remember with horror the steam-bath they were compelled to take. "The chamber of hell," they called the bath. At first blush, it would really seem to have been an awful thing. They would pick out all the Cantonists that had so much as a scratch on their bodies or the smallest sign of an eruption, paint the wounds with tar, and put the boys, stripped, on the highest shelf in the steam-bath. And below was a row of attendants armed with birch-rods. The kettle was boiling fiercely, the stones were red-hot, and the attendants emptied jars of boiling water ceaselessly upon the stones. The steam would rise, penetrate every pore of the skin, and—sting! sting!—enter into the very flesh. The pain was horrible: it pricked, and pricked, and there was no air to breathe. It was simply choking. If the boy happened to roll down, those below stood ready to meet him with the rods.

All this is true. At the same time, was it mere cruelty? It is very simple: we were a lot of Jewish lads snatched from the arms of our mothers. On the eve of every Sabbath our mothers would take us in hand, wash us, comb our hair, change our underwear, and dress us in our Sabbath clothes. All at once we were taken into exile. Days, weeks, nay, months, we passed in the dust of the roads, in perspiration and dirt, and sleeping on the ground. Our underwear had not been changed. No water had touched our bodies. So we became afflicted with all kinds of eruptions. That is why we had to pass through what we called "the chamber of hell." And this will give you an idea of the rest.

To make a long story short: there were many of us, and we were distributed in various places. Many of the boys had taken ill; many died on the road. The survivors were distributed

among the peasants, to be brought up by them till they reached the age of entering the army. I was among the latter. Many months, maybe even years, I passed in knocking about from village to village, from town to town, till, at last, I came into the joint possession of a certain Peter Semionovich Khlopov and his wife Anna Petrovna. My master was neither old nor young; he was neither a plain peasant nor a nobleman. He was the clerk of the village. In those days that was considered a genteel occupation, honorable and well-paid. He had no sons, but he had one daughter, Marusya by name. She was then about fourteen years old, very good-looking, gay, and rather wild.

According to the regulations, all the Cantonists in the village had to report daily for military drill and exercise on the drill grounds before the house of the sergeant. He lived in the same village. At the request of my patron

Khlopov I was excused from the daily drill, and had to report but once a week. You see, Peter expected to derive some benefit from me by employing me about the house and in the field.

Now it was surely through the merits of my ancestors that I happened to be placed in the household of Peter Khlopov. Peter himself spent but little of his time at home. Most of the time he was at the office, and his free moments he liked to spend at the tavern, which was owned by the only Jew in the village, " our Moshko " the Khlopovs used to call him. But whenever he happened to be at home, Peter was very kind to me, especially when he was just a little tipsy. Perhaps he dreamt of adopting me as his son: he had no sons of his own. And he tried to make me like military service. " When you grow up," he used to say, " you will become an officer, and wear a sword. Soldiers will

stand at attention before you, and salute you. You will win distinction in battle, and be found worthy of being presented to the Czar." He also told me stories of Russian military life. By that time I had learned some Russian. They were really nice stories, as far as I could understand them; but they were made nicer yet by what I could not understand of them. For then I was free to add something to the stories myself, or change them according to my own fancy. If you are a lover of stories, take the advice of a plain old man like myself. Never pay any attention to stories in which everything has been prepared from the very start, and you can tell the end as soon as you begin to read them or listen to them. Such stories make one yawn and fall asleep. Stories of this kind my daughter reads to me once in a while, and I always fall asleep over them. Stories are good only when told the way Khlopov used to tell them to me.

But that is all irrelevant. In short, Khlopov was kind to me.

As to Anna, she was entirely different. She was close-mouthed, ill-tempered, and a great stay-at-home. She never visited her neighbors, and they, in turn, called on her very rarely. In the village she was spoken of as a snob and a hypocrite. Peter was afraid of her as of the plague, especially in his sober hours. All her power lay in her eyes. When that strong man —he who had the whole village in the palm of his hand—felt her eye fixed on him, his strength left him. It seemed as if some devil were ready to jump out of that eye and turn the house topsyturvy. You fellows are mere youngsters, you have seen nothing of the world yet; but take it from me, there are eyes that seem quite harmless when you first look into them. But just try to arouse their temper: you will see a hellish fire spring up in them. Have you ever

looked into my Rebekah's eyes? Well, beware of eyes.

The look Anna gave me when I first entered her house promised me nothing good. She hated me heartily. She never called me by my own name. She called me "Zhid" all the time, in a tone of deep hatred and contempt.

Among the orders the Cantonists had to obey were the following: to speak no Yiddish; to say no Jewish prayer; to recite daily a certain prayer before the image of the Virgin and before the crucifix, and not to abstain from non-kosher food.

With regard to all injunctions except the last, Anna was very strict with me. But she was not very particular as to the last injunction. Out of sheer stinginess she fed me on bread and vegetables, and that in the kitchen. Once she did offer me some meat, and I refused to touch it. Then she got very angry, flew into a temper,

and decided to complain to the sergeant. But Peter did not let her be so cruel. "Let him grow up, he will know better," said Peter, waving his hand at me.

Then Anna made up her mind to force me to eat forbidden meat. But I was obstinate. And she decided once more to complain to the sergeant. Just at that time another Cantonist had been found guilty of some offense. He belonged to the same village; his name was Jacob. I did not know him at that time. His patron complained that Jacob persisted in reciting Hebrew prayers, and that he abstained from meat. Jacob was condemned to twenty lashes with rods. An order was issued that all Cantonists should assemble to witness the flogging of the offender.

In the course of time we got used to such sights; but the first time we were terribly shocked. Just imagine: a lad of about fifteen is

stripped, put on the ground face downwards; one man sits on his head, and another on his feet. Two men are put on either side of him, each with a bundle of birch-rods in his hand. Ten times each of them has to strike him with the rods, to make up the twenty lashes. I looked at the face of the culprit: it was as white as chalk. His lips were moving. I thought he was reciting the prayer: "And He, the Merciful, will forgive sin, and will not destroy" Up went the rods, down they went: a piercing cry blood flaps of loose skin cries "one, two, three" again cries sudden silence more cries again silence "four, five" "stop!"

Because the culprit fainted, the sergeant in the goodness of his heart divided the punishment into two parts. Jacob was carried off to the hospital, and it was put down in the book

that he was to get ten more lashes after his recovery.

I went home.

Had Anna given me a piece of pork to eat that evening, I do not know what I should have done.

That night I saw the old rabbi in my dream. He was standing before me, with bowed head and tears dropping from his eyes.

I do not remember the way Marusya treated me at first. But I do remember the look she gave me when I first entered her father's house. There are trifling matters that one remembers forever. Hers was a telltale look, wild and merry. It is hard to describe it in words—as if she wanted to say, "Welcome, friend! You did well in coming here. I need just you to pass my leisure hours with me!" And she really needed someone like myself, for she never associated with the children of the village.

The beautiful lively girl used to have her fits of the blues. Then it was impossible to look at her face without pitying her. At such times her mother could not get a word out of her, and the whole expression of her face was changed to such an extent that she seemed to have aged suddenly. She would look the very image of her mother then. And a peculiar expression would steal over her face, which estranged her from other people, and perhaps brought her nearer to me. During those fits of despondency she was sure to follow me if I happened to leave the room and go outside. She would join me and spend hour after hour in childish prattle with me, and her merriment and wildness knew no limits. Little by little I got used to her, and felt, in turn, a longing for her company during my own fits of lonesomeness.

The day after I had witnessed Jacob's punishment I felt miserable. I was restless and

excitable, and did not know what to do with myself. I thought my heart would burst within me. I asked myself all kinds of questions: What am I doing here? What did I come here for? What are all those people to me? As if I had come there only the day before, and of my own free will. . . .

Marusya looked sharply at me. Very likely she recognized that something was worrying me. I felt a desire to share my feelings with her. I got up and walked out into the garden behind the house. In a moment she followed me. I made a clean breast of it, and told her all I had had to witness the day before.

She listened, shivering, and asked in a tremulous voice:

"And what did they beat him for?"

"He said a Hebrew prayer, and refused to eat meat."

"And why did he refuse to eat meat?"

"It is forbidden."

"Forbidden? Why?"

I was silent.

She also became silent; then she laid her hand on me, and said with her usual merriment:

"They will not beat you."

"How do you know?"

"The sergeant is a good friend of ours."

"But if your mother should complain about me?"

"Then I shall go in your stead, if they should decide to switch you."

She laughed heartily at her own suggestion. Her laughter made me laugh, too; we both laughed, and laughed without knowing why. And in a mood completely changed I returned to the house. After that I felt very near to the girl.

Well, time passed, months and years: I lost track of them. But I do remember that the

time had come when I knew enough Russian to make myself understood, was fit for any kind of work about the house and in the field, and could give my patron entire satisfaction.

One day, I remember, I tried very hard to have my work well and promptly done, so as to earn, for once, the good-will of Anna herself. I felt a longing for the friendly smile of a mother. But Anna kept going in and out, and did not pay the least attention to me. I was sitting on the bench outside the house alone. My dog was lying at my feet, looking at me very intently. His eyes seemed to be full of tears. And let me tell you by the way, his lot in the house was entirely different from mine. When he first entered Peter's courtyard, the dogs met him with howls. He tried to find shelter in the kitchen, but was chased out with sticks. "Where did that tramp come from?" wondered the people. Then my Barker saw that he

could expect no charity from the people, and he put his trust in his own teeth. He stood up bravely, and fought all the dogs of the household till blood flowed. Then only did the masters of the house appreciate his doggish virtues and accomplishments. They befriended him, and allowed him his rations. So my Barker saved his skin. Yet his lot did not seem to please him. He recognized, by some peculiar dog-sense, that I, his fellow in exile, was unhappy myself and sorry for him too. He felt that somehow his own days of prosperity would not last long. Whenever I sat about lonely and moping, he would stretch himself at my feet, and look straight into my eyes, with an expression of earnestness and wonderment, as if he wanted to ask me, How is that, why don't you fight for your rights the way I did?

Presently Anna came out, shot a glance at me, and said:

"Well, now, there is the lazy Zhid sitting idle, and I have to work and prepare meals for him, so that he may find everything ready!" I got up, and began to look around for something to do.

"Go, catch the little pig and bring it over here," ordered Anna.

The day before I had overheard her say that it was time to kill the little pig. I did not relish the job by any means. I felt sorry for the porkling: mere pig though it was, it had after all grown up in our house. And it was hard on me to have a hand in the affair. But one angry word of Anna's set me a-going. In a moment my hand was on the animal, which trusted me and believed in me implicitly. Then Anna handed me a rope to bind it. I did as she wanted; the pig started to squeal and squeak horribly. To me it sounded like "Zhid, Zhid, is that the way to treat *me?*"

Then Anna handed me a knife, and showed me where to make the cut. . . . The pig began to bleed fearfully, gurgling, and choking with his own blood. Forthwith Anna ordered wood to be brought, a fire to be kindled, and the pig to be put upon it. I did all as I had been ordered. My dog was watching me intently, greatly bewildered; the pig groaned and groaned; the flames licked his body and embraced it—and my dog was barking and yelping away up into the sky.

That night I dreamt that my brother the Shohet and I were on trial in Heaven before the seat of judgment, with various animals complaining against us. Only clean fowl, such as geese, pigeons, and the like were complaining against my brother, and they all pleaded in clear, good Hebrew, saying, "Was it for your own consumption that you killed us all?" But it was only the pig that complained

against me, and it pleaded in screeches and grunts that nobody could understand. . . .

The next morning Anna got up early, and made me stand before the ikon of the Virgin and recite a certain prayer. At dinner she seated me alongside of Peter, gave me some roast pork, and looked sharply at me. I guess, while making all those preparations, Anna had only one thing in mind: to put Peter up against me while he was drunk. I took fright, and began to chew away at the pork. But then the screeches and the grunts of the pig rang in my ears, and I thought they came right from within my insides; I wondered how they could listen to all that, and yet eat the pork in perfect comfort. Suddenly a lump in my throat began to choke me. . . . Nausea, retching and something happened to me: I vomited everything out, right on the table. Everybody jumped away from the table in disgust and anger. I

met Marusya's eye, and was ashamed to look into it. Anna got up, boiling with rage, took me by the ear, and pulled me outside: "Get out of here, you dirty Zhid; and don't you dare enter my house any more!"

Well, she chased me out. Peter and Marusya kept quiet. Thoroughly miserable, I dropped down on the bench behind the house; my dog stretched himself out on the ground at my feet and looked into my eyes. Then I began to talk to my fellow in misfortune: "Do you hear, doggie, we have been chased out. . . . What does that mean? Did we come here of our own free will? It is by force that we were brought here; so what sense is there in chasing us out?"

And I thought my dog understood me; a sound came from the depths of his throat, and died away there. Then a thought began to haunt me: Maybe it is really time to run away. If they run after me and overtake me, I shall

simply say that my patron chased me out of his house. And the thought, Home! to your parents! took possession of me, and tortured me ceaselessly. Said I to myself: "If they chase me out, I am certainly free!" But then, just see the power of the birch-rod: I knew well that much time would pass before my patron would notice my absence; and before the sergeant was informed, and people were dispatched to pursue me, more time would pass. Then I should be far away from the place. By that time I was quite hardened: I was not afraid to hide in the woods; devils and evil spirits I did not fear any more. I had learned well enough that no devil will ever trouble a man as much as one human being can trouble another. And yet, when I remembered the swish of the rods over the naked flesh, the spurting blood, the loose flaps of skin, and the futile outcries, I was paralyzed with fear. No, it was

not really fear: it was a sort of submissive adoration. Had a birch-rod been lying near me, I should have kissed it with fear and respect. It is hard for me to explain to you. You youngsters are not capable of understanding.

And as I was sitting there, full of gloomy thoughts, I did not notice that the sun had set, and night had come. It got so dark that I could not see my dog lying at my feet. Suddenly I felt something touch me and pass lightly over my hair. I thought it was an ant or a night moth, and I raised my hand to chase it away. Then it changed its place, and I felt it at the nape of my neck. I tried to catch the thing that was making my neck itch, and caught a hand, soft and warm. I shuddered and started back: before me was Marusya, bending over me. I wanted to get up, but she put her hands on me heavily, sat down at my side, all the while pressing my hand between hers.

"Why are you sitting here?" she asked.

"Didn't your mother chase me out?"

"That is nothing. Don't you know her temper? That is her way."

"She keeps nagging at me all the time, and calls me nothing but Zhid, Zhid."

"And what of it? Aren't you a Jew? Should I feel insulted if some one were to call me Christian?!"

I had nothing to say. And it dawned upon me at that moment that I was really insulting myself by objecting to being called Zhid. True, Anna meant to jeer at me and insult me; but did it depend on her alone?

"And what are you going to do now?" asked Marusya.

"I want to run away."

"Without telling me?"

She peered into my face, and I felt as if two streams of warmth had emptied themselves into

me. My eyes had become somewhat accustomed to the darkness, and I could discern every movement of her body. A delicate smile was playing around her mouth, and my feeling of despondency was giving way before it. I felt that after all I had a friend in the house, a good, loving, and beautiful friend.

I shuddered and broke out into tears. Then she began to play caressingly with my hair and pat me on my neck and face. She did well to let me have my cry out. By and by I felt relieved. She wanted to withdraw her hand, but then I held it fast.

"So you were going to run away, and that without my knowledge?" said she.

"No," I said with a deep sigh.

"And if I should ever call you Zhid, will you be angry with me?"

"No," answered I, thoroughly vanquished.

"Well, then you are a dear boy, and I like you!"

I felt the touch of soft, warm lips on my neck I closed my eyes, that the dark night sky and the shining stars might not see me. And when I recognized what had happened to me, I felt ashamed. Marusya disappeared, and soon returned with a bag in her hand.

"Papa said you should go out with the horses for the night. Here is some food in the bag. Take it and go out."

This she shot out quickly, and in a tone of authority, as befits the daughter of the patron, and as if what had passed between us were nothing but a dream.

"Going out for the night" was a peculiar custom. You can have no idea of what it meant. The logic of it was this: The cattle that had been worked the whole of the day were, to be sure, earning their fodder for the day. And the owners felt under obligation

and necessity to feed them during their working hours. But how about the night, when the animals rested, and did no work? Where should the fodder for the night time come from? So the custom developed of letting the animals browse in some neighbor's meadow during the night. That was cheaper. But that neighbor also had cattle; he, too, had horses that did not earn their feed during the night. Do you know what that neighbor did? He did the same. He, too, sent out his horses stealthily, into his neighbor's meadow. So, in the long run, every one had his cattle browse secretly in some neighbor's meadow, and all were happy. But when the trespassing shepherd happened to be caught poaching, he got a whipping. And yet, strictly speaking, it was not stealing; it was a mere usage. The landowners seemed to have agreed beforehand: "If you happen to catch my shepherd poach-

ing, you may whip him, provided you do not object if I give a whipping to your shepherd on a similar occasion." In spite of all this I rather liked " going out for the night." I loved those nights in the open field. When the moon gave but little light, and one could see but a few steps away, I forgot my immediate surroundings, and my imagination was free! I would peer into the open sky, would bring before my mind's eye father and mother and all who were dear to me, and would feel near to them; for the sky that spread over all of us was the very same. I could imagine my father celebrating the new moon with a prayer. I could imagine my mother watching for the same star I was looking at; I could imagine that we were really looking at the same spot. . . . Then tears would come into my eyes. My mother, I would think, was crying, too. And the night listened to me, and the stars listened to me. . . .

The crickets chirped, and if I chose, I could believe they shared my sorrows with me, and were sighing over my fate. . . .

Idle fancy, nonsense, you think; but when one has nothing real to look up to, dreams are very sweet. A light breeze would steal over me, refresh me, and bring me new hope; and I trusted I should not be a prisoner always, the day of my release would surely come. At such happy moments I would fall asleep gazing at the stars. And if the sudden whip of the landowner did not put an end to my dreams, I would dream away, and see things no language could describe.

Well, I took the bag and led the horses out into the open field. But that time, out of sheer spite or for some other reason, I did not go into our neighbor's field, but descended right into the valley that my patron had left lying fallow, and stretched myself upon the soft grass of the hospitable turf.

That night I longed to bring father and mother before my mind's eye and have an imaginary talk with them. But I did not succeed. Instead, the figure of the old rabbi hovered before my eyes. It seemed to me that he was looking at me angrily, and telling me the story of Joseph the righteous: how he lived in the house of Potiphar, and ate nothing but vegetables.

But when I reminded myself of Joseph the righteous, I felt my heart sink at the thought of what Marusya had done to me. I could not deny that the good looks of the Gentile girl were endearing her to me, that out of her hands I would eat pork ten times a day, and that in fact I myself was trying to put up a defense of her. I took all the responsibility on myself. I was ready to believe that she did not seek my company, but that it was I who called her to myself. I was a sinner in my own estimation,

and I could not even cry. Then it seemed to me that the sky was much darker than usual, and the stars did not shine at all. With such thoughts in my mind I fell asleep.

I awoke at the sound of voices. Some one is crying, I thought. The sound seemed near enough. It rose and rose and filled the valley. It made me shudder. The soft, plaintive chant swelled and grew louder, as if addressed to me. It gripped my very heart. I stood up all in a shiver, and started to walk in the direction of the sound. But around me, up and down, on every side, was total darkness. The moon had set long ago. I moved away only a few steps from the horses, and could not make them out any more. By and by I could distinguish some words, and I recognized the heart-gripping chant of a Hebrew Psalm. . . .

"For the Lord knoweth the path of the
righteous,
And the path of the wicked shall perish." . . .

My fears vanished, and gave place to a feeling of surprise.

"Where can that chanting come from," thought I, "and here in exile, too?"

Then I began to doubt it all, thinking it was but a dream.

"Why do the nations rage,
And the peoples imagine a vain thing?"

The voices were drawing me forward irresistibly, and I decided to join the chorus, come what might. And I continued the Psalm in a loud voice:

"The kings of the earth stood up "

The chanting ceased; I heard steps approaching me.

"Who is there?" asked a voice, in Yiddish.

"It is I," answered I, "and who are you?"

"It is we!" shouted many voices in chorus.

"Cantonists?"

"A Cantonist, too?"

Thus exchanging questions, we met. They turned out to be three Cantonists, who lived in a village at some distance from Peter's house. I had never met them before. They, too, had " gone out for the night," and we had happened to use the same valley.

I love to mention their names. The oldest of them was Jacob, whom you remember from the punishment he underwent. The others were Simeon and Reuben. But there in the valley they introduced themselves to me with the names they were called by at home: Yekil, Shimele, and Ruvek. I found out later that the valley was their meeting-place. It was a sort of Klaus, " Rabbi Yekil's Klaus " the boys called it. Yekil was a boy of about fifteen, who was well-equipped with knowledge of the Torah when he was taken away from his home.

In the long years of our exile we had forgotten the Jewish calendar completely. But Yekil

prided himself on being able to distinguish the days "by their color and smell," especially Fridays; and his friends confirmed his statements. He used to boast that he could keep track of every day of the year, and never miss a single day of the Jewish holidays. Every Jewish holiday they met in the valley on Peter's estate. According to Yekil's calendar, the eve of the Fast of the Ninth of Av fell on that very day. That is why they had gathered in the valley that night. "If so," said I, "what is the use of reciting that Psalm? Were it not more proper to recite Lamentations?"

"We do not know Lamentations by heart," explained Yekil, with the authority of a rabbi, "but we do know some Psalms, and these we recite on every holiday. For, at bottom, are mere words the main thing? Your real prayer is not what you say with your lips, but what you feel with the whole of your heart. As long

as the words are in the holy tongue, it all depends on the feelings you wish to put into them. As my father, may he rest in peace, used to instruct me, the second Psalm is the same as the festival hymn, 'Thou hast chosen us from among the nations,' if you feel that way; or it may be the same as Lamentations. It all depends on the feelings in our heart, and on the meaning we wish to put into the words!"

Yekil's talk and the sounds of Yiddish speech, which I had not heard since I left home, impressed me in a wonderful way. Here I found myself all at once in the company of Jews like father and mother. But I felt very much below that wonderful boy who could decide questions of Jewish law like some great rabbi. Indeed, he seemed to me little short of a rabbi in our small congregation. Then I began to feel more despondent than ever. I considered myself the sinner of our little community. I knew I was

guilty of eating pork and of other grave trespasses, and I felt quite unworthy of being a member of the pious congregation.

Meanwhile little Reuben discovered the contents of my bag.

"Boys, grub!" exclaimed he, excitedly. At the word "grub" the congregation was thrown into a flutter. That was the way of the Cantonists. They could not help getting excited at the sight of any article of food, even when they were not hungry at all. In the long run our patrons fed us well enough, and on the whole we could not complain of lack of food. But we were fed according to the calculations of our patrons, and not according to our own appetites. So it became our habit to eat whenever victuals were put before us, even on a full stomach. "Eat whenever you have something to eat, so as not to go hungry when there may be no rations." That was a standing rule

among the Cantonists. They began fumbling in my bag, and I was dying with shame at the thought that soon they would discover the piece of pork, and that my sin would become known to the pious congregation. Then I broke down, and with tears began to confess my sins.

"I have sinned," said I, sobbing, "it is pork. I could not withstand the temptation."

At that moment it seemed to me that Yekil was the judge, and the boys who had found the pork were the witnesses against me. Yekil listened to my partial confession, and the two "witnesses" hung their heads, and hid their faces in shame, as if they were the accused. But I sobbed and cried bitterly.

"Now, listen, little one," Yekil turned to me. "I do not know whether you have suffered the horrors of hell that we have suffered. Did they paint your body with tar, and put you up

on the highest shelf in the steam-bath, and choke you with burning steam? Did they flog you with birch-rods for having been caught mumbling a Hebrew prayer? Did they make you kneel for hours on sharp stones for having refused to kiss the ikon and the crucifix? Did they discover you secretly kissing the Arba-Kanfos, and give you as many lashes as there are threads in the Tzitzis? If you have not passed through all that, uncover our backs, and count the welts that still mark them! And to this you must add the number of blows I have still to get, simply because my little body could not take in at once all it was expected to take in. And yet, not a day passed without our having recited our Modeh-Ani. As to eating pork, we abstained from it in spite of the rods. Then they gave up flogging us; but, instead of that punishment, they gave us nothing but pork to eat. Two days we held out; we did not touch

any food. We did not get even a drink of water. Do you see little Simeon? Well, he tried to eat the grass in the courtyard. . . . On the third day of our fast I saw my father in my dream. He was dressed in his holiday clothes, and holding the Bible in his hands he quoted the passage, 'Be ye mindful of your lives.' Suddenly, the earth burst open, and the Angel of Death appeared. He had rods in one hand and a piece of swine's flesh in the other. He put the piece of pork into my mouth. I looked up, terror-stricken, to my father, but he smiled. His smile filled the place with light. He said to me, 'Eatest thou this of thy own free will?' Then he began to soar upwards, and called out to me from afar: 'Tell all thy comrades, the Cantonists: Your reward is great. Every sigh of yours is a prayer, every good thought of yours is a good action! Only beware, lest you die of hunger; then surely you will merit eternal punishment!'

"I awoke. Since then we eat all kinds of forbidden food. The main thing is that we have remained Jews, and that as Jews we shall return home to our parents. It is clear to me now that the Holy One, blessed be He, will not consider all that a sin on our part!"

I felt as if a heavy load had been taken off my shoulders. My eyes began to flow with tears of gladness. Then, having once started my confession, I decided to confess to my second sin also. Meanwhile Simeon had pulled the bread and the meat out of my bag.

"Glutton!" exclaimed Yekil, angrily. "Have you forgotten that it is the night of the Fast of the Ninth of Av?"

The boy, abashed, returned the things to the bag, and moved away a few steps. Then I told Yekil all that had passed between me and Marusya, and tried unconsciously to defend her in every way. I think I exaggerated a good

deal when I tried to show that Marusya liked the Jews very much, indeed.

"And what was the end of it?" asked Yekil, with some fear. "Did she really kiss you?" The other boys echoed the question. I looked down, and said nothing.

"Is she good-looking?"

I still gave no answer.

"I have forgotten your name. What is it?"

"Samuel."

"Now listen, Samuel, this is a very serious affair. It is much worse than what is told of Joseph the righteous. Do you understand? I do not really know how to make it clear to you. It is very dangerous to find good and true friends right here in exile, in the very ranks of our enemies."

"Why?" wondered I.

"I cannot tell you, but this is how I feel. Insulted and outraged we have been brought

here; insulted and outraged we should depart from here. Ours is the right of the oppressed; and that right we must cherish till we return home."

"I do not understand!"

Jacob looked at me sharply, and said: "Well, I have warned you; keep away from her."

His words entered into the depths of my heart. I bowed my head before Yekil, and submitted to his authority. That was the way we all felt: Yekil had only to look at us to subject us to his will. It was hard to resist him.

I felt a great change in myself: I had been relieved of the weight of two sins. Of one I had been absolved completely, and the other I had confessed in public and repented of. I gladly joined the little congregation, and we returned to our Psalms, which we recited instead of Lamentations. At the conclusion I

proposed that we chant the Psalm "By the rivers of Babylon," which we all knew by heart.

And we, a congregation of four little Jews, stood up in the valley on the estate of Peter Khlopov, concealed by steep hills and by the darkness of the night: thieves for the benefit of our masters, and mourners of Zion on our own account. . . . And we chanted out of the very depths of our hearts:

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept, remembering Zion." . . .

We chanted the whole of it, sat down and wept, remembering at the same time all we had gone through ourselves, and also the position we were in at that time.—

Here old Samuel shuddered and stopped abruptly. The sun had set, and he reminded himself that he had forgotten to say his afternoon prayer. He jumped down hastily, washed

his hands in a near-by pool, returned to his seat, and became absorbed in his devotions.

VI

By and by the streaks of light disappeared in the twilight sky, and the wintry night threw the mantle of thick and misty blackness over us.

Presently I heard the old man conclude his prayer: "When the world will be reclaimed through the kingship of the Almighty; when all mortals will acknowledge Thy name. . . . on that day the Lord will be One, and His name will be One!"

Out of the darkness came the devout words; they seemed to take wing, as though to pierce the shrouding mist and scatter it; but they themselves were finally dissolved in the triumphant blackness. . . .

I did not have to urge the old man to continue his tale. His prayers over, he picked up

the thread of his narrative, as if something were driving him to give a full account of what he had passed through.—

The day I became acquainted with Jacob—continued the old man—I consider the beginning of a new period in my life. I became accustomed to consider him my superior, whose behavior had to be taken as an example. Jacob spoke as an authority whenever he did speak, and he never wavered in his decisions. Whenever he happened to be in doubt, his father would "instruct" him in his dreams. Thus we lived according to Jacob's decisions and dreams. I got used to eating forbidden food, to breaking the Sabbath, and trespassing against all the ordinances of the ritual without compunction. And yet Jacob used to preach to us, to bear floggings and all kinds of punishments rather than turn traitor to our faith. So I got the notion that our faith is neither prayers,

nor a collection of ordinances of varying importance, but something I could not name, nor point to with my finger. Jacob, I thought, certainly knows all about it; but I do not. All I could do was to *feel* it; so could Anna. Otherwise she would not have called me Zhid, and would not have hated me so much, in spite of seeing me break all the ordinances of the Jewish ritual.

At times I thought that I and my comrades were captains in God's army, that all His ordinances were not meant for us, but for the plain soldiers of the line. They, the rank and file, must be subjected to discipline, must know how to submit to authority; all of which does not apply to the commanding officers. It seemed to me that this was what the Holy One, blessed be He, had deigned to reveal to us through the dreams of Jacob: there is another religion for you, the elect. *You* will surely know what is forbidden, and what is permitted. . . .

Sometimes, again, I imagined that I might best prove true to my faith if I set my heart against the temptation that Satan had put before me in the person of Marusya. If I turned away from her, I thought, I might at once gain my share in the future world. So I armed myself against Marusya's influence in every possible way. I firmly resolved to throw back at her any food she might offer me. If she laid her hand on me, I would push it away from me, and tell her plainly that I was a Jew, and she—a nobody.

So I fought with her shadow, and, indeed, got the best of it as long as she herself was away. But the moment she appeared, all my weapons became useless. She made me feel like one drunk. I could not withstand the wildfire of her eye, nor the charm of her merry talk, nor the wonderful attraction of her whole person. At the same time there was not a trace

of deviltry about her: it was simply an attraction which I could not resist. And when she laid her soft hand on me, I bent under it, and gave myself up entirely. And she did what she wanted: where buttons were missing, she sewed them on; and where a patch was needed, she put it in. She was a little mother to me. She used to bring me all kinds of delicacies and order me to eat them; and I could not disobey her. In short, she made me forget Jacob and his teachings. But the moment I met Jacob I forgot Marusya's charms, and reminded myself that it was sinful to accept favors in exile. Then I would repent of my past actions from the very depths of my heart—till I again was face to face with Marusya. I was between the hammer and the anvil.

My meetings with Jacob were regular and frequent. After what according to Jacob's calendar was the Ninth of Av, we met nightly

in the valley on Peter's estate, till a disagreement broke out among us. I would not permit the cattle of the whole neighborhood to browse on the estate of my patron, and Simeon and Reuben would not agree to let my patron's horses be brought to the meadows of their patrons. Our congregation nearly broke up. But here Jacob intervened with his expert decision.

" Boys," said he, " you must know that ' going out for the night ' is really a form of stealing. True, we do not steal for our own benefit. Yet, as long as we have a hand in it, we must manage it in a fair way. So let us figure out how many horses every one of our patrons possesses. And let us arrange the nights according to the number of horses each of the patrons has. According to this calculation we shall change places. We shall spend more nights in the meadows of those who have more horses. That will make ' fair stealing.' "

This plan of Jacob was accepted, not as a proposition, but as an order. Since that time we began to "steal with justice." And our patrons slept peacefully, delighted with their unpunished thievery, till a Gentile boy, one Serge Ivánovich, joined us on one of his own "nights." He was the son of the village elder, and a cousin of Peter Khlopov. He was compelled to obey Jacob, but the next morning he blabbed about it all over the village.

Of course, our patrons were angry. Jacob took the whole blame on himself, and suffered punishment for all of us. Then "Jacob's Klaus" was closed, because our patrons gave up sending us out "for the night."

Well, if you please, their dissatisfaction was not entirely groundless: they found themselves fooled by us, and cheated in a way. For every one of them had been thinking that his horse would bring him some profit every night, equal

to the value of a horse's browsing. Seven nights, seven times that profit; thirty nights, thirty times that profit. . . . All at once these "profits" had vanished: it turned out that every horse had been browsing at the expense of his own master; so the expected profits became a total loss. Of course, stealing is stealing. But then, they argued, had the Zhid youngsters any right to meddle with their affairs? Was it their property that was being stolen? As one of my Gentile acquaintances told me once: "The trouble with the Jews is that they are always pushing themselves in where they are not wanted at all."

Indeed, it was this fault of ours that Serge kept pointing out to me and berating us for. Well, Jacob's Klaus had been closed. But we managed to get together in different places. Once in a while we came to see one another at our patrons' houses, and they did not object.

I do not know who told Marusya what kind of a chap Jacob was, and what he thought of her; but she hated him from the moment she first saw him, when he came to visit me.

"He is a real savage," she would say. "I never saw such a Jew. I am simply afraid of him. I am afraid of those wild eyes of his. I detest him, anyway." That is what she used to tell me.

Whenever Jacob came to see me, and Marusya happened to be in the room, she would walk out immediately, and would not return before he was out of the house. I rather liked it. I could not be giving in to both of them at the same time.

Such were the surroundings that shaped my life during those days. Peter befriended me; but Anna kept on worrying me and making me miserable. Marusya loved me as a sister loves a brother, and the fire of her eyes ate into my

heart. Jacob kept preaching to me that it was wrong to accept favors from Gentiles, and that we had to fight for our faith. Serge became my bitter enemy from the time he betrayed our scheme of " honest stealing."

To top it all, my sergeant tried to put me through the paces of the military drill, and succeeded.

But my own self seemed to have been totally forgotten and left out of the account.

By and by the summer passed, and most of the following winter; and in the Khlopov household preparations were made for some holiday, I forget which. Those days of preparation were our most miserable days in exile. When Anna was busy on the eve of a holiday, I could not help remembering our own Sabbath eves at home, the Sabbath days in the Klaus, as well as the other holidays, and all the things that are so dear to the heart of the Jewish boy. That

was the time when I felt especially lonely and homesick; it was as though a fever were burning within me. Then neither tears nor even Marusya's company did me any good. I felt as if red-hot coals had been packed up right here in my breast. Did you ever feel that way? I felt like rolling on the ground and pressing my chest against something hard. I felt I was going mad. I felt like jumping, crying, singing, and fighting all at once. I felt as if even lashes would be welcome, simply to get rid of that horrible heartache.

On that particular day Khlopov was late in coming home. Marusya remarked that she had seen her father enter the tavern. Then Anna began to curse "our Moshko," the tavern keeper. Marusya objected:

"Tut, tut, mother, is it any of Moshko's fault? Does he compel papa to go there? Does he compel him to drink?"

Then Anna flew into a temper, and poured out a torrent of curses and insults on Marusya. I don't know what happened to me then. My blood was up; my fists tightened. It was a dangerous moment; I was ready to pounce upon Anna. I did not know that Marusya had been watching me all the while from behind, and understood all that was passing within me. Presently the door opened, and Khlopov entered, rather tipsy, hopping and jigging. That was his way when in his cups. When he was under the influence of liquor, his soul seemed to spread beyond its usual limits and light up his face with smiles. At such moments he would he ready to hug, to kiss, or to cry; or else to curse, to fight, and to laugh at the same time.

Right here you can see the difference between the Jew and the Gentile. The finer soul of the Jew may contract and settle on the very point

of his nose. But the grosser soul of the Gentile needs, as it were, more space to spread over. This, I believe, is why Khlopov never failed to get a clean shave on the eve of every holiday.

As soon as Khlopov had entered the room, he began to play with me and Marusya. He gave us candy, and insisted on dancing a jig with us.

Anna met him with a frown: "Drunk again?" But this time her eyes seemed to have no power over Khlopov. He could not stand it any longer, and gave tit for tat. "Zhidóvka!" he shouted. I looked at Anna: she turned red. Marusya blushed. Khlopov sobered up, and his soul shrank to its usual size. Anna went to her room. The spell was broken.

The word "Zhidóvka" hurled at Anna made me start back. What could it mean, I wondered. I felt sorry for Khlopov, for Marusya, for Anna, and for the holiday mood

that had been spoilt by a single word. And it seemed to me it was my fault to some extent. Who, I thought, had anything in common with Zhidóvka if not myself? Or was it Khlopov?—

Here the old man was interrupted by the neighing of the horses.

The forward horse seemed to be getting proud of the comparative freedom he enjoyed, and bit his neighbor, only to remind him of it. The latter, unable to turn around in the harness, resented the insult by kicking. But then the driver plied his whip, and there was peace again.

"Would you take the trouble to dismount? Just walk up that hill: it will do you good to warm yourselves up a little after sitting so long in one place."

That was the driver's suggestion; and as no one refuses obedience to drivers on the road, we dismounted.

VII

The next day—resumed the old man—the situation became a little clearer to me. Marusya told me that according to the gossip of the village her mother was a converted Jewess. She, Marusya, was not so sure of it. Her father would call her mother a Jewess once in a while, but that happened only when he was drunk. So she did not know whether he merely repeated the village gossip, or had his own information in the matter. And when she asked her mother, the latter would fly into a temper.

"Papa himself," said Marusya, "likes Jews; but mother hates them. I like papa more than mamma; I also like Jews; I often play with Moshko's girls when mother is not around. I do not understand why mother dislikes the Jews so much."

Then Marusya insisted I should tell her the real truth about the Jews, as they are at home:

were they like myself, or like Jacob, the wild one? But I stopped listening to her chatter, and began to think of what she had told me about her mother. For in case it was true that Anna was a convert, then—why, then Marusya herself was half a Jewess. I decided to solve the mystery.

Now let me tell you that as a result of our Cantonist training we were not only as bold as eagles, as courageous as lions, as swift as the deer in doing the will of our patrons, but also as sly as foxes in finding a way out of a difficulty. And, by the way, that was also the opinion of our late commander, Colonel Pavel Akimovich. A keen-eyed commander and a kind-hearted master was he, may his lot be in Paradise among the godly men of the Gentile tribes. Yes, if he was an eagle, we were his chicks; if he was a lion, we were his whelps! This is what he used to say: "In time of need, you have no

better soldier than the Jew. But then you must know how to use him. Do not give him too many instructions, and do not try to explain it all to him from beginning to end. If you instruct him too much, he will be afraid to do any scheming on his own hook, and you will be the loser. Just give him your order, and tell him what the order is for. Then you may be sure he will get it for you, even if he should have to go to hell for it!" This is what Colonel Pavel Akimovich used to say of us.

Now, once I decided to find out Anna's secret, I thought it all out beforehand, as a Cantonist should; and I hit upon a plan.

That was at the beginning of spring. One day Khlopov left on a journey to the neighboring villages to collect the taxes. He had to stay away some time. The whole of that day Anna kept worrying me as usual. She sent me on unnecessary errands, she wanted me to be

in two places at the same time. She yelled, she cursed, she shook me, and mauled me, she pulled me by the ears. She knew well how to make one miserable. When night came, I went to sleep in the anteroom; that was my bedroom. Anna was abed, but not asleep. Marusya had long been asleep. Then Anna remembered that she had forgotten to close the door leading to the anteroom, and she ordered me to get up and close it. I made believe I was sleeping soundly, and began to snore loudly. She kept on calling me, but I kept on snoring. Suddenly I began to cry, as if from my sleep: "O mother, leave Anna alone. She too is a mother! Pity her family!"

Anna became silent. I half opened my eyes and looked at her through the open door. A candle was burning on the table near her bed, and I could see that she was frightened, and was listening intently. Then I continued,

somewhat differently: "I beg of you, mother, is it her fault? Doesn't she feed me? Isn't she a mother too?"

Then I began to cry as if in my sleep. "What?" I asked suddenly, "Anna?! Anna —a Jewess too?!"

Then I noticed that Anna was watching Marusya's bed. I saw she was afraid Marusya might overhear what was not intended for her ears. She put on her night robe, came to my bed, and began in a whisper: "Are you sleeping? Get up, my boy, wake up!"

I did "wake up," and put on a frightened appearance. "What did you cry about?" she asked. "I dreamt something terrible." "What did you dream about?" I kept silent. "Tell me, tell me!" she insisted. "I saw my mother in my dream." "Is she alive yet?" I told a lie. I said my mother was long dead. "And what did she tell you?" "She said that

. . . ." "Tell me, tell me!" "I cannot repeat that in Russian." "Then say it in Yiddish." I looked with make-believe surprise at Anna. "She said: 'I shall come to Anna at night and choke her, if she doesn't give up abusing you.'" At this Anna turned red. I continued: "And she said also, 'Anna ought to have pity on Jewish children, because she is a Jewess herself.'"

My scheme worked well. Anna began to treat me in an entirely different way, and my position in the house not only improved, but became the opposite of what it had been. At times, when no one was around, she even spoke Yiddish to me. Apparently she liked to remain alone in the house with me and chat with me. You must know, her position in the village was all but agreeable. She had very few acquaintances; and she would have been better off without any. When she happened

to have visitors, a mutual suspicion at once became apparent, in their behavior and their talk. There was much more flattery, much more sweetness of speech than is common among people. One could see that each spoke only to hide her innermost thoughts. Every conversation ended as it began: with gossip about women who were not zealous enough in matters of church attendance. And when it came to that, Anna invariably blushed, simply because she was afraid she might blush. Then, feeling the blood coming to her face, she would try to hide her confusion, and would chatter away ceaselessly, to show how punctual she was herself in church matters. On taking leave, Anna's friends would exchange significant glances, and Anna would have been either too stupid or else too wise not to notice the sting of those sly looks.

As to Peter, he treated Anna fairly well;

and when they happened to quarrel, it was mostly her own fault. One night—it was long after I had found out Anna's secret—I happened to be sleepless, and I overheard Anna talking angrily to Peter. She was scolding him for having forgotten to prepare oil for the lamp before the ikon of some saint. It was that saint's day, and Khlopov had either forgotten or neglected it. He was very careless in church matters, and Anna never got tired of taking him to task for it. This time she didn't leave off nagging him, till he lost patience, and said: "Were I really as religious as you want me to be, I should have taken to wife a woman who—well, who is a real Christian herself." Perhaps Peter never meant to insult Anna by reminding her of that which she wished to forget. Or perhaps Peter thought he had offered a valid excuse. But Anna was offended and turned around crying.

The trouble with Anna was that she was very sensitive. That was a trait of hers. When she heard something said about herself, she never was satisfied with the plain meaning of what was said, but tried to give the words every other possible meaning. Every chance remark she happened to overhear she took to be meant for herself. Well, this same sensitiveness one may find in most of the Cantonists. For instance, in the regiment of General Luders, in which I served once, we had many Tatars, some Karaites, and a goodly number of Jews. To all appearances there was no trouble; but let one soldier call another "Antichrist," and every Jew in the regiment would get excited. The Tatars and the Karaites rather liked to call their comrades Antichrist, even if they happened to be Christians. But it was only the Jews whom the word set a-shivering. It is as I tell you—the Jew is painfully sensitive. Well,

to cut my story short, Anna did not have a happy time of it. She was all alone, surrounded though she was by many people. She became taciturn in spite of herself. And this is a great misfortune when it happens with womenfolk. Women are naturally great talkers, and you may do them much harm, if you do not give them a chance to talk. So I became her crony as soon as I discovered her secret. Then she tried to make up for the many years of silence by chattering incessantly. In her long talks she often said things she had denied before. Once she told me that she felt a longing to see her relations and townspeople. But the next time she said that she hated them mightily. Very likely she did hate them. We all dislike that which has caused us pain and harm. So Anna disliked her relations for having caused her remorse, homesickness, and perhaps shame. Once her tongue was loosed, she did not stop

until she had poured out the proverbial nine measures given to woman as her share of the ten measures of speech in the world. She spoke Yiddish even in the presence of Marusya and of Jacob, who used to visit me once in a while. By and by Anna began to treat him in a very friendly way. Only Marusya avoided him, and never spoke a word to him. She simply hated him.

Thus in time the house of Anna became something like a Jewish settlement, or rather like some sort of a Klaus, especially when Peter was away from home. We all used to gather there, and talk Yiddish, just as in a Klaus. For under Anna's roof we felt perfectly free. She became a mother to the homeless Cantonists. Even Marusya took to jabbering a little Yiddish. Jacob began to feel that the leadership of our little community was passing into the hands of Anna, and he became jealous. He

did not see that the very fact that he too was falling under her spell was influencing our community greatly, and that thus he was stamping it with his own character.

Anna liked him more than she did any one of us. Moreover, she respected him. At times it looked as if she were somewhat afraid of him.

Now you must know that at bottom Anna had never deserted her religion. Instead, she carried the burdens of both religions; to the fear of the Jewish hell she seemed to have added the fear of the Christian hell. I suspect that she was still in the habit of reciting her Hebrew prayer before going to sleep. She also believed in dreams. In this respect all women are the same. Of course, she had her dreams, and Jacob thought himself able to interpret them; he used to seek her company for that purpose.

So we all began to feel very much at home in Anna's house.

Once it happened that Peter entered the house at a moment when we were all so much absorbed in our Yiddish conversation that we did not notice his presence. He sat down quietly among us and took part in our talk, smiling in his usual manner. He asked us some questions, and we answered him. Then we asked him something, and he answered us in pure, good Yiddish, as if there were nothing new or surprising about it. At last Marusya awoke, and exclaimed with glad surprise: "Papa, can you speak Yiddish too?" We all shuddered, as if caught stealing. Peter's smile broadened, covering the whole of his face.

"Did you imagine that I do not know it? I wish you could speak it as well as I do."

That made me suspect that Peter might have been himself a convert from Judaism, and I decided to ask Anna about it. She cleared up my doubts very soon. She told me that Peter

had been brought up in an exclusively Jewish town. He had been employed there as a clerk in the Town Hall. As he always had to deal with Jews, he finally learned their language. She told me at the same time that Peter rather liked Jews, and that he was a man of more than ordinary ability; otherwise, she said, it would have been very foolish on her part to leave the religion of her father for the sake of Peter.

"What did you say was the name of your native town?" I asked out of sheer curiosity. She mentioned my native town. I felt a shiver go through me. "And what was your father's name?" I asked again, trembling.

"Bendet."

"Was he a wine-dealer?"

"Yes; and how do you know it? Are you of the same town?"

I told her my father's name, and we clasped hands in surprise.—

While the old man was telling his tale, the clouds dispersed. I looked upwards: the dark sky spread vaultlike above us studded with stars, some in groups, some far apart. Then I remembered what the Lord had promised to our father Abraham: "And I shall multiply thy seed as the stars in heaven." And I thought I saw in the sky naught but so many groups of Jews: some kept in exile, some confined within the nebulæ of the Milky Way. . . . But even then, it seemed to me, there was a strong attraction, a deep sympathy between them all, far apart and scattered though they were. Even so they formed aggregations of shining stars—far apart, yet near. . . .

VIII

The wind began to grow cold; we pressed close to one another to keep warm. The old man drew his old coat tightly about him, and continued his story:—

Well, we of our little community threw off the yoke of the old Torah, yet refused to accept the yoke of the new Torah. Nevertheless our lives were far from being barren. Our longing for the things we were forbidden to practise prompted us to invent a good many new usages. For instance, long before we had the freedom of Anna's house, we managed to meet every Saturday to exchange a few words in Yiddish; two or three words were sufficient to satisfy our sense of duty. Those meetings were among the things for the sake of which we were ready to run any risk of discovery. Of course, we dared not recite our Modeh-Ani: our patrons might have overheard us, and that meant a sure flogging. But we practised repeating the prayer mentally, and we always managed to do it with our faces turned in the direction from which we thought we had come, and where our native towns were situated. Jacob had a little piece

of cloth, a remnant of an Arba-Kanfos. The Tzitzis had long been torn away, to prevent discovery and avoid punishment; but what was left of it we kept secretly, and we used to kiss it at opportune moments, as if it were a scroll of the Torah.

Then we made a point of abstaining from work at least one hour every Saturday and on the days that were Jewish holidays according to Jacob's calendar. On the other hand, work was considered obligatory on Sundays and on Christian holidays. Tearing up some papers or starting a fire was thought sufficient.

These and many other usages we invented, slowly, one after another. In time we got into the habit of observing them very punctiliously, even after we had made ourselves at home in Anna's house. But over and above all Jacob never gave up preaching to me that it was wrong on the part of an oppressed Jew to accept favors

from a non-Jew. And this he preached without ever noticing that he was himself giving in to temptation when he accepted favors and kindnesses from Anna. As to Marusya, he always found a pretext to separate us whenever he met me in her company. I was very angry with him for that, but I could not tell him so openly. At last it came to such a pass that Marusya lost all patience, and made me the scapegoat. She stopped having anything to do with me.

Now that was a real misfortune as far as I was concerned. For only then did I come to realize how much I was attached to the girl. I felt an utter emptiness in my heart; I began to feel myself a total stranger in the house. When everybody was talking merrily, I kept quiet, as if I were a mourner. I was always looking for Marusya, I was always trying to catch her eye. I hoped that our eyes would meet, that she

would at least look at me. But she kept on avoiding me. No, she did not avoid me: she simply did not seem to know that I was in the house. I was exasperated; and when once I came face to face with Jacob, I lost my temper, and berated him roundly, attacking him on his weakest side:

"Is it on me that you are spying? How many favors, if you please, have you accepted yourself from Anna? Perhaps your father gave you a special dispensation in your dreams?"

To all of this Jacob replied very calmly: "First of all, your analogy does not hold, for you and Marusya are both youngsters. And, second, even supposing I were sinning, it is your fault then, too; for it is clearly your duty to warn me. At the same time, you can imagine how much the whole thing grieves me."

Well, after all, I was ready to forgive him his sins, provided he overlooked mine.

Yes, that happened on a Saturday. We were all standing in line on the drill grounds. I was in the first line, and Jacob was directly behind me in the second line. We were going through the paces of the so-called three-step exercise. It was this way: the soldier had to stretch his left leg forward on a somewhat oblique line, so that the sole of his foot touched the ground without resting on it. That was the first pace, the hardest of all, as we had to stand on one leg, with the other a dead weight. In this position we had to keep standing till the command was given for the second pace. At that moment we had to shift to our left leg, and quickly bend the right leg at the knee-joint at a right angle. Thus we had to stand till the command was given for the third pace, when we had to unbend the right leg and bring it forward. On that day we were kept at the first pace unusually long. My muscles began to

twitch, and I felt as if needles were pricking me from under the skin. Suddenly I felt as if I had lost my footing, and was suspended in the air. Then I fell. This was my first mishap on that day. The sergeant made believe that he did not notice it, and I congratulated myself, hoping it would pass unremarked.

The sergeant was busy with the last of our line: somehow he did not like the way he was standing. Just then, in a crazy fit of contrariness, I felt a sudden desire to fulfil my duty of talking a few words of Yiddish on Saturday. I turned my head and whispered to Jacob in Yiddish: "He is going to keep us here the whole day! When shall we have our hour's rest?" At that moment the sergeant passed between the lines, and overheard me speaking Yiddish. O yes, they have sharp ears, those drill-masters. As you know, speaking Yiddish was considered a great breach of discipline,

which never passed unpunished. It always meant a whipping. So I had made myself guilty of two offenses. On that day I did not go home empty-handed: I got an order to report the next morning to receive my twenty lashes. I received my order like a soldier, saluted, and seemed cool about it—for the time being. That pleased the sergeant greatly; he was a thorough soldier himself, and heartily hated tenderfeet and cowards. He looked at me approvingly, and said: "Because you have always been a good soldier, I shall make the punishment easier for you. You have the privilege of dividing the number of lashes in two: ten you get to-morrow, and ten you may put off for some other time." That was the customary way of making the punishment easier in the cases when the Cantonist was either too weak to take in the whole number of lashes at once, or was thought to deserve consideration other-

wise. A temporary relief it certainly was; but in the end the relief was worse than the punishment itself. Between the first half of the punishment and the other half, life was a burden to the culprit: he could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep in peace. Every moment he felt as if his back were not his own, that he merely had borrowed it for a while, and sooner or later he would have to stretch himself on the ground, to bear the weight of a rider on his neck and of another on his feet, and have the rods fall on him with a swish: one, two, three. . . .

And the pain was awful. It felt as if the skin were being torn away in strips. A new lash on the fresh cut, and another strip was torn out; then another strip across the two. One felt like yelling, but the throat was dry. One felt like scratching the ground, but the finger nails had long become soft. One felt

like biting one's own flesh, but one had no power over himself so long as a man was sitting on his neck and pinning it tight to the ground. It was hard enough to stand the ordeal itself, as hard as hell. But it was still harder to bear in mind that such a punishment was coming. It felt as if one was being flogged every moment. So, in the stress of the moment, I found my speech. "Sir," said I, saluting, "I would rather stand twenty-five lashes at once than have the twenty lashes divided in two parts."

"Why?" asked the sergeant.

"Because a Russian soldier has no time to keep accounts that concern only his own back. He has no right to forget his military duties even for a single moment."

Here the sergeant gave me an approving smile, and reduced the twenty lashes to ten. Then Jacob stepped forward, stood at attention, saluted, and said:

"Sir, it is not his fault, but mine. It was I who spoke to him. He was silent. As to his falling during the drill, that was also my fault: I made him stumble. I am ready to stand the punishment, because I am the guilty one."

The sergeant threw a quick, admiring glance at Jacob, and said:

"Your intentions are certainly good, because you wish to sacrifice yourself for your friend. You might serve as a model for all the young soldiers. Boys, do you hear? Love one another as Jacob loves his guilty friend! But you must know that your sergeant is not to be fooled; his eyes are everywhere, and he certainly knows the guilty one!"

When I went home, I felt neither glad nor despondent; I felt as if I did not exist at all—as if my very body did not belong to me, but had been borrowed for a few hours. That night I woke up many times; I felt as if snakes

were crawling over my flesh. I got up early the next morning. Marusya was yet in bed, half awake.

"Where are you going?" asked Anna, standing in my way. I kept silent for a while, then I made a clean breast of it all. Anna shook her head at me, and said with tears glistening in her eyes: "Poor fellow, and where are you going to?"

"I am going to the sergeant's; if it has been decreed, let it be done quickly."

"Why should you go hungry?"

"That does not matter." I waved my hand, and walked away slowly. On the way I met some people, but I did not greet them; some people overtook me, but I did not even notice them pass. I had nothing in my mind except my own shoulders and the stinging rods. And for a moment I really lost heart; I acted like a tenderfoot instead of a Cantonist. I was

ready to cry; my tears were choking me, as if I were mamma's only darling. It was about a two hours' walk to the sergeant's. When I arrived there, I stood outside and waited for him. Then I thought I heard the sound of some not unfamiliar voice: arguments, expostulations, again arguments. Somebody was talking earnestly behind the closed door. I could not make out what was said. Neither did I have any desire to know what it was all about. I was very impatient. I longed for the sergeant to come out and do the thing he had to do to me. I wished for all to be over and done with —that I had already been carried to the hospital and been bandaged; that the days in the hospital had gone; that I had recovered and had been dismissed. But at the same time I hoped the sergeant might be a little slow in coming out, and that my pain might be postponed for a little while. In short, I was divided

against myself: I had two wishes, one excluding the other. Suddenly the door opened, and on the threshold was standing—do you know who? Marusya! Yes, dear God, it was Marusya. She was standing at the right of the sergeant. With one hand he was playing with her locks, and in the other he was holding both her hands. Then he turned to me:

"Hourvitz, this young lady has interceded in your favor. And a soldier is in honor bound to respect the request of such a nice girl. So, for her sake, all is forgiven this time. Go home!"

At that moment I was ready to take forty lashes, if only I might remove the sergeant's hands from off Marusya. I went home at a very slow pace, so that Marusya might overtake me on the road. I thought she might talk to me then. I meant to ask her how she had gotten ahead of me without my noticing her.

The minutes seemed hours; I thought she would never come out of the house. Then a crazy idea struck me—to return to the sergeant's house and see what had happened to Marusya. After all, I thought, what can the sergeant do to me more than have me whipped? At that moment I thought little of the rods; it seemed to me just then that the rods did not hurt so much after all, and the pain they caused was only temporary; it was hardly worth while giving the matter much thought. And, I am sure, for the moment I had lost all sense of pain. Had they flogged me then, I should not have felt any pain. I turned back. Luckily I did not have to go as far as the sergeant's house; I met Marusya on the way. She passed me, looking right and left, as if I were a mere stone lying on the roadside.

"Marusya!" I called after her. But she kept on walking ahead, as if she had not heard

me. "Marusya," I cried again, "is that the way you are going to treat me?! Why, then, did you save me from the rods?"

She stopped for a moment, as though thinking of something. Her handkerchief fell from her hand. She sighed deeply, picked up the handkerchief, and resumed her walk. I returned to the village alone. Anna met me with tears of joy in her eyes. I broke out into tears myself, without really knowing why. I caught Marusya's eye, but her look was a puzzle to me.—

Presently our horses began to trot at a lively pace; they felt the road sloping downhill. The driver, who had long been nodding in his seat, was suddenly shaken out of his slumbers. He woke up with a start, and flourished his whip; which is a habit acquired in his trade. Uphill or downhill, your coach-driver is bound to work with his whip. Let him be disturbed, no matter

when,—even when he drops into a doze in his Klaus on a Yom-Kippur night—he will invariably shake his hand at the intruder as if swinging his whip.

As the horses increased their speed, the baying of dogs became audible; a village was not far off. Cheering and inviting as the distant chorus sounded, it resolved itself by and by into single barks, and every bark seemed to say, "Away with you," "Stand back," "No strangers admitted," and the like. A gust of wind brought to our nostrils warmish air laden with all kinds of smells: smells of smouldering dung, of garbage, and of humanity in general. Soon lights began to twinkle from huddled shanties and from broad-faced houses, as if welcoming our arrival. It looked as if the village were priding itself on its lights, and boasting before Heaven: "See how much stronger I am: sunk in the deep slush of a dirty

valley, I have my own lights and my own stars within myself."

The village seemed to have shrunk within the limits of its own nest, glad that it need not know the ills and the hardships of travel.

The driver ordered an hour's rest.

IX

After we had warmed ourselves a little in the village inn, we returned to our seats in the coach, and the driver continued his "talk" with the horses. The old man resumed his story:—

Well, I had fallen into debt; and my two creditors were very hard to satisfy. Jacob had offered, though vainly, to sacrifice his skin for mine and suffer the lashes intended for me. Marusya took the trouble to walk all the way to the sergeant's house and talk with him, to save me from punishment. Thus I was in-

debted to both of them, but with a difference. While trying to belittle the good intentions of Jacob, I tried at the same time to belittle my obligation to him, whose authority was fast becoming irksome. Marusya, on the other hand, refused to accept my thanks.

Well, by that time I had long considered myself a good young soldier. I knew I was growing in the favor of my superiors. The sergeant had praised me repeatedly, in my presence and in my absence. I began to feel my own worth, to cherish military aspirations, and to burn with the ambition of a soldier. Many a time I dreamt I was promoted from the ranks, had become a colonel, and was promoted to a higher rank still. . . . I fought in battles, performed wonderful feats. . . .

About that time they began to talk in the army about the Turks. Jacob and I had our differences with respect to them. He tried to

prove to me that the Turks, being the sons of Ishmael, were our cousins. But I did not believe it. I did not wish to believe it, in spite of everything. He claimed that the children of Ishmael were heroes, brave as lions. But I used to say, "Just give me ten Turks, and I shall put them out of business with one shot!"

On account of these talks Jacob and I began to avoid one another's company. He was too hard on me, with his endless contradictions, admonitions, and warnings.

One day we went out target shooting. Jacob fired twelve shots in succession, at long range, and every shot was a bull's eye. He outdid all his comrades on that day. Then the sergeant put his hand on Jacob's shoulder, and said: "Bravo, Jacob! I see a coming officer in you! Have you a petition to make of me for something I can grant?" Then Jacob saluted, and asked to be permitted to recite his Hebrew

prayers daily and rest on Saturdays. The sergeant smiled, and granted Jacob's request.

I may just as well tell you now that long before this incident the authorities had lost all hope of getting us converted to the ruling faith. They became convinced that we did not budge so much as an inch, in spite of all the pressure and tortures we had to stand. They realized at last that only compulsion could make us say certain prayers before the crucifix every morning. So by and by they gave it up. And Jacob's request was not so hard to grant after all.

From that moment Jacob became a bitter enemy of the Turks. He pictured them as midgets, and named his patron's dog "Turk." Aside from all this there was a general change in Jacob's disposition; it was something that one could only feel, but not exactly see.

We had a very hard winter that year, quite

different from what we have now. Nowadays the very seasons of the year seem to have softened: new generations—new people; new times—new winters. Why, only last mid-winter I saw the rabbi's daughter-in-law pass through the streets bareheaded. In mid-summer she drank hot tea, and caught a cold in her teeth. It is all the way I am telling you: the world is turned topsyturvy. In olden times a married woman would not dare uncover her hair even in the presence of her husband; it was also thought dangerous even for a man to go out bareheaded in winter time; and nobody ever caught a cold in midsummer. Nowadays things are different: only last winter I saw soldiers shiver with cold, while in our time a soldier was ashamed to show he was afraid of the cold. Yes, new generations, new soldiers; new times, new seasons. . . .

In short, that winter was a very hard one:

heavy snowfalls, snow-storms, and no roads. The peasants could not go outside of the village; they had to stay home, and being idle and lonesome, they celebrated their weddings at that convenient season. Many people used to go to their weddings merely as sight-seers, I among them, for my sergeant gave me plenty of freedom. I had been excused from a large part of the drill; it was really superfluous as far as I was concerned. I had long learned all there was to learn. So I had much leisure to knock about in. Well, my sergeant rather liked us grown-up Cantonists. We were, with hardly an exception, very good soldiers indeed. And, after all, what was the hope of the sergeant, if not the praise of his superior, "Bravo, sergeant!" He liked to hear it, just as we ourselves liked to hear his "Bravo, boys, well done!"

One of the weddings of that season hap-

pened to take place in the house of the richest peasant of the village, one of those peasants who try to rise above their class. It goes without saying that among the invited guests was the very cream of the village society: the few Government officials, the village elder, the clerk of the village, our sergeant, etc. Yes, as to our sergeant, he was a jolly sort of fellow. He enjoyed a good laugh himself, and liked to hear others laugh. He liked to pass jokes with his soldiers, too. But then he was always the first to laugh at his own jokes; it seemed as if he might laugh himself to death. Of course, his hearty laughter made one laugh with him, joke or no joke. Yes, he was a good fellow; may he, too, have his place among the righteous in Paradise. True, he had us switched once in a while; but that was the way of the world in those days. For he, too, grew up and had been promoted from under the

birch-rods. You know what all this reminds me of? Take this driver, for instance: he is used to belabor his horses with the whip; and yet he likes them, you may be sure. Of course, our sergeant would scold us once in a while, too. But then his scolding seemed to hurt him more than us: he looked as if he had gotten the scolding himself. The jokers of our company used to say of him, that he stood up every morning before his own uniform, and saluted it as it hung on the wall. . . .

In short, he liked to mingle with people and to make merry; then he was always the happiest of all.

Of course, he also had been invited to that wedding.

Marusya, too, was there, and that was against her habit. She kept away from all kinds of public gatherings and festivities. And right she was, too, in staying away. For it was in

the company of other girls that her brooding, melancholy disposition showed itself most clearly. Did I say melancholy? No, it was not exactly melancholy. It was rather the feeling of total isolation, which one could not help reading on her face. And a total stranger she certainly was in that throng. When she kept quiet, her very silence betrayed her presence among the chattering girls. One could almost hear her silence. And when she did take part in the conversation, her voice somehow sounded strange and far away in the chorus of voices. Her very dress seemed different, though she was dressed just like any other of the village girls. It was in her gait, her deportment, in her very being that she differed from the rest of the girls. From the moment she entered the house she had to run the gauntlet of inquisitive looks, which seemed to pierce her very body and make her look like a sieve, as it

were. I looked at Marusya, and it seemed to me that her face had become longer and her lips more compressed; her eyes seemed wider open and lying deeper in their sockets. She looked shrunken and contracted, very much like my mother on the eve of the Ninth of Av, when she read aloud the Lamentations for the benefit of her illiterate women-friends.

Well, that evening the sergeant danced with Marusya, neglecting the other girls entirely. They kept on refusing the invitations of the cavaliers, in the hope that they might yet have a chance to dance with the sergeant. The result was that the cavaliers were angry with the girls; the girls, with Marusya; and I, with the sergeant.

And when a recess was called, something happened: one of the bachelors, Serge Ivánovich, my old enemy, stood up behind Marusya, and shouted with all his might, "Zhidóvka!"

Then the envious girls broke out into a malicious giggle.

Marusya turned crimson. She looked first at the sergeant: he was curling his mustache, and tried to look angry. Then Marusya turned away from him, and I caught her eye. Well, that was too much for me. I could not stand it any longer. I sprang at Serge and dragged him to Marusya. I struck him once and twice, got him by the neck, and belabored him with the hilt of my sword.

"Apologize!" said I.

Now, no one is so obedient as your Gentile once you have him down. And Serge Ivánovich did not balk. He apologized in the very words that I dictated to him. Then I let him go. The sergeant looked at me approvingly, as if wishing to say, "Well done!" This prevented the young men from attacking me.

Marusya left the house, and I followed her.

Once outside, she broke out into tears. She said something between sobs, but I could not make out what she meant. I thought she was complaining of someone, probably her mother. I wished very much to comfort her, but I did not know how. So we walked on in silence. The hard, crisp snow was squeaking rhythmically under our feet, as if we were trying to play a tune. And from the house snatches of music reached us, mixed with sounds of quarreling and merry-making. It seemed as if all those sounds were pursuing us: "Zhid! Zhid!" Suddenly a sense of resentment overtook me, as if I had been called upon to defend the Jews. And I blurted out:

"If it is so hard to be insulted once by a youngster who cannot count his own years yet, how much harder is it to hear insults day in and day out, year in and year out?"

Marusya looked at me with sparkling eyes. She thought I was angry with her and meant her. Then she wanted to soothe my feelings, and she said wonderingly:

"Years? What, pray, did I do to you? I only wanted you not to listen to Jacob. He is a bad man. He hates me. He is forever on the lookout to separate us!"

"He is afraid," said I, "I might yet get converted."

At this Marusya gave me an irresistible look, the look of a mother, of a loving sister.

"No," she said decidedly, "I shall not let you do that. You and your daughters will be unhappy forever. You know what I have decided? I have decided never to get married. For I know that my own daughters will always be called Zhidóvka." At this point I became sorry for the turn our conversation had taken, and I cared no more for the defense of the

Jews. After a brief silence Marusya turned to me:

"Why does mother dislike the Jews so much? She surely knows them better than papa does."

"Very likely she fears being called Zhidóvka, as they called you."

"But, then, why did she get herself into that trouble?"

"Ask her yourself; she may tell you."

Never mind what passed between us afterwards. It does not suit a man of my age to go into particulars, the way the story-writers do. Suffice it to tell you that our relations became very much complicated. Marusya attached herself to me; she became a sister to me.

So, after all, Jacob's fears had been well founded from the very beginning. I felt I had gotten myself into a tangle, but I did nothing to escape from it; on the contrary, I was getting myself deeper and deeper into it.—

Here the old man's eyes flashed with a fire that fairly penetrated the darkness, and for a moment I thought it was but a youth of eighteen who was sitting opposite me. I was glad that the dark hid the whiteness of the old man's beard from my view. The white beard was entirely out of harmony with the youthful ardor of its owner's speech.

There was a silence of a few minutes, and the old man continued his story:—

X

Hard as Anna's lot was, Peter himself was not very happy either. I do not know how things are managed nowadays. As I told you before, new times bring new people with new ways. It never happened in our day that a Jewish maiden, no matter what class she belonged to, should throw herself at a young Gentile, and tell him, "Now, I am ready to leave my faith and my people, if you will marry

me." In our day there never was a case of apostasy except after a good deal of courting. No Jewish girl ever left her faith, unless there was a proposal of marriage accompanied by much coaxing. It required a great deal of coaxing and enticing on the part of the man. Only extravagant promises and assurances, which never could be made good, could prompt a Jewish maiden to leave her faith. And such had been the case with Khlopov, as Anna told me afterwards.

Anna, or, as she had been called as a Jewess, Hannah, had spent her girlhood under the rule of a stepmother. Peter was a young man earning a fair salary as a clerk at the Town Hall. He was a frequent visitor at Bendet's wine-shop. And Peter was an expert judge of the comeliness of Jewish maidens in general and of Anna's beauty in particular. So, when Peter did come, he came as a veritable angel-protector. He

came to save her from the yoke of a stepmother and make her his wife. He promised her "golden castles" and a "paradise on earth." All that would be hers but for one obstacle: she had to renounce her faith. At first Anna was unwilling. But the stepmother made Anna as miserable as only human beings know how. Then Bendet's business began to go from bad to worse, so that Anna had very slim prospects of ever exchanging the yoke of a stepmother for that of a husband. At the same time Peter urged his suit, coaxing her more and more. Anna warned Peter, that in her new life she might find misery instead of happiness. She was sure she would be a stranger to the people with whom she would have to come in contact. Should she happen to be below the other women, they would despise her. Should she happen to be above them, they would envy and hate her. Here she certainly spoke like a

prophetess. But Peter kept on assuring her that she was the very best of all women, and that he would be her protector in all possible troubles. Then she argued that he might not be happy himself; that he would have to fight many a battle. His parents would surely not agree with him. His relations would shun him. In short, he would be isolated. Peter laughed at her, and told her that all her fears were nothing but the imagination of an unhappy maiden who did not believe in the possibility of ever being happy. He told her also that not all the women in the world were as bad as her stepmother. Still Hannah was unwilling. Then Peter attacked her with a new weapon. He made believe he was ill, and let her know that if he should die, it would be her fault; and if he did not die, he would commit suicide, and his last thought would be that the Jews are cruel, and rejoice in the misfortune of a Christian. Then

Hannah gave in, did as she was urged, and was renamed Anna.

Now what Anna found in actual life far exceeded what Hannah had prophesied. The women of the village kept aloof from her, and for many reasons. The first reason was that she never visited the village tavern. She never drank any liquor herself, nor treated her visitors with it. And nothing in the world brings such people together as liquor does. Then the men hated her for the purity and chastity which she brought from her father's house. Besides, men and women alike envied the prosperity of Khlopov's household, which was due only to Anna's thrift. All those reasons, as well as many others, were included in the one word "Zhidóvka." So that word may stand for anything you choose. As to Peter's brothers and relatives, they not only kept away from him, but also became his open or secret enemies.

By and by Peter recognized that Hannah's fears were not the result of mere imagination, but the true prophecy of a mature young woman, who had foreseen her own future, and he could not help feeling hurt. That bitter thought was possibly the only reason why he frequented the establishment of "our Moshko." He wanted to get rid of the accursed thought; but he did not succeed. He pined for the time when he lived among Jews; but Anna could not possibly return to live among them. In the meantime Peter sickened, and took to bed. Anna knew there was still some litigation pending between Khlopov and his relations, and his title to the property he held by inheritance was disputed. And she always feared the worst: should she survive Peter, his relations would start proceedings against her, dispossess her and Marusya, and let them shift for themselves. Many a time did Anna mention the matter to

Peter in a casual, off-hand way; but he merely smiled his usual smile, listened, and forgot all about it the next morning.

Well, that was a weakness of Peter's. Writing official papers had been his lifework, and when he had to do writing in his own behalf, he felt disgusted. He could not touch the pen when his own affairs were involved. Even the writing of a simple letter he used to put off from day to day. And when it came to clear up the title to his holding, he would have had to write papers and fill out documents enough to load two pack-donkeys. Small wonder, then, that he kept putting it off.

But the time came when it was necessary that Anna should speak to him about the matter; and yet she could not muster up enough courage to do it. For at times she thought herself nothing but a stranger in the place. Who was she anyway, to inherit the property left by

old Simeon Khlopov, deceased? On one occasion she asked me to call Peter's attention to the matter of his title to the property. I entered the sick-room and began to discuss the matter cautiously, in a roundabout way, so as not to excite the patient by implying that his end might be near. But my precautions were unnecessary. He spoke very coolly of the possibility of his end coming at any moment, but at the same time he insisted that there was really no need to hurry, a proper time to settle the matter would be found.

Now here you see one more difference between Jews and Gentiles. To look at th Gentiles, would you ever think them all fools? Why, you may find many a shrewd man among them, many a man who could get me and you into his net, as the spider the fly. But when it comes to taking care of the next day, the future, they are rather foolish. They do not foresee

things as clearly as the Jew does. For instance, do I not work hard to save up money for my daughter's dowry, even though I hardly expect her to get married for two years at least? Do I not try hard to pay off the mortgage on my house, so as to leave it to my children free and clear? Say what you will, I hold to my opinion, that Gentile-folk do not feel the "to-morrow" as keenly as we do. If you like, the whole life of a Jew is nothing but an anticipation of "to-morrow." Many a time I went without a meal simply because I forgot to eat, or thought I had eaten already. But I never forget anything that concerns the coming day. I can hardly explain it to you, but many a time I thought, dull as my brains were made by my soldier's grub, that the Jew is altogether a creature of "to-morrow."

Well, Peter listened to me; he saw there was reason in what I told him; and yet he did not feel that way. He did not feel the necessity of acting immediately, and he put it off.

Now, it seems to me that when things come to such a pass between a Gentile husband and his Jewish wife, the results are bound to be strange, unusual, and anything but agreeable. It is all something like—let me see—something like what is written in the Bible about the confusion of tongues, when one could not understand the speech of his fellow. Indeed, had Peter known that it was Anna who sent me to him, he would have resented it surely, and would have thought that she cared more for his inheritance than she cared for him.

And Peter died, after a long illness.

Then Anna had to go through an ordeal she had not yet experienced in her life of apostasy: she had to go through the ceremony of mourning according to the prescribed rules. And her fears regarding the house turned out to have been but too well founded. The village elder, in the name of the rest of the relatives,

disputed Peter's title to the property. Anna was given a small sum of money, and the whole piece of property was deeded over to Serge Ivánovich. As to Anna and Marusya, they had to be satisfied with the little money they received.

In the end it turned out that there was a deeper purpose at the bottom of the whole affair. That scamp, Serge Ivánovich, understood very well that in every respect Marusya was above the rest of the village girls, and he made up his mind to marry her. To be sure, he hated the Jews: they always managed to intrude where they were least wanted; and he never missed an opportunity of insulting Anna and her daughter. But that is just the way they all are: they will spit to-day, to lick it off to-morrow. At the same time he knew well enough that Marusya would not be willing to have him. Yet, in spite of it all, he sent some

friends with the formal message of a proposal. As an inducement he promised to deed the whole property to Anna and Marusya. Anna seemed willing enough to accept the offer. Then Marusya turned to me. I began to side with Anna.

"You are a liar!" shouted Marusya, turning to me. And she was right. Indeed, I did not wish at all to see Marusya marry Serge. But I cannot tell why I had said the opposite. Then Marusya curtly dismissed the representatives of the suitor.

I decided not to part from the two unhappy women just then and leave them alone in their misfortune. But Heaven willed otherwise. The Crimean War had been decided upon, and our regiment was the first to be sent to the front. So I was taken from my dear friends just when they needed me most.—

XI

A mixture of light and darkness appeared in a corner of the eastern sky, something like the reflection of a distant conflagration. The light spread farther and farther, and swallowed many a star. It looked as if some half-extinguished firebrand of a world had blazed up again, and was burning brightly once more. But no! that was neither a world-catastrophe nor a conflagration: some mysterious new creation was struggling into existence. And after the noiseless storm and battle of lights, the moon appeared, angry-looking and ragged-edged. In the light of the moon the speaker too looked strange and fantastic, like a relic of a world that is no more.

The old man continued:—

Well, on that day we turned a new leaf in our lives. Till then we had been like people who live against their own will, without aim

or object. We had to get up in the morning, because we had gone to bed the night before. We ate, because we were hungry. We went to our drills, because we were ordered to go. And we went to sleep at night, because we felt tired. All our existence seemed to be only for the sake of discipline; and that discipline, again, seemed a thing in itself. But the moment they told us of mobilization and war, our riddle was solved. It suddenly became clear to us why we had been caught and brought to where we were, and why we had been suffering all the time. It looked as if year in, year out, we had been walking in the darkness of some cave, and all of a sudden our path became light. And we were happy.

I saw Jacob: he, too, looked happy, which had not been his way for the last few years. From the moment he had received permission to pray in Hebrew and observe the Sabbath,

his mood changed for the worse: he looked as if he were "possessed." He complained that his prayers were not so sweet to him any more as they had been before; and the Sabbath rest was a real burden upon him. Then, his father did not appear in his dreams any more. Besides, he confessed that he forgot his prayers many a time, and was not very strict as to the Sabbath. He feared his prayers were no longer acceptable in Heaven. No, said he, that was not his destiny: the Jewishness of a Cantonist lay only in suffering martyrdom. But with the news of the coming war, a change came over him. He became gay as a child.

One morning, when we were assembled on the drill grounds before the house of the sergeant, I was called into the house. "Hourvitz," said my good sergeant, turning to me, "three beautiful creatures ask me not to send you to the fighting line but to appoint you to

some auxiliary company. Ask, and I shall do so."

"Sir," said I, "if this be your order, I have but to obey; but if my wish counts for anything, I should prefer to stay with the colors and go to the fighting line. Otherwise what was our preparation for and our training of many years?"

A smile of satisfaction appeared on the face of the sergeant.

"And if you fall in battle?"

"I shall not fall, sir, before I make others fall."

"What makes you feel so sure of it?"

"I cannot tell, sir; but it is enough if I am sure of it."

"Well, I agree with you. Now let us hear what your fair advocates have to say."

He opened the door of an adjoining room, and Anna, Marusya, and the sergeant's wife

appeared. Then a dispute began. They insisted on their opinion, and I on mine.

"Let us count votes," said the sergeant. "I grant you two votes; together with my own vote it makes three against three."

Then I looked at Marusya. She thought a little, and added her vote to mine. So the majority prevailed. When I went outside, Marusya followed me, and handed me a small parcel. What I found there, among other things, was a small Hebrew prayer book, which Marusya must have gotten at Moshko's, and a small silver cross which she had always worn around her neck. We looked at each other and kept silent: was there anything to be said?

After she had walked away a few steps, she turned around, as if she had forgotten something.

"And if you return . . . ?"

"Then to you I return," was my answer.

She went on, and I turned to look back in her direction: she also looked back at me. Later I turned again to look at her, and she, too, kept looking back, until we lost sight of each other.

Before Anna could be dispossessed, Heaven wrought a miracle: Serge Ivánovich was drafted into the army. He was attached to our regiment, and we served in the same company. In the meantime Anna remained in possession of the house.

XII

So, after all, they had not been mere sport, those years of drilling, of exercising, of training to "stand up," to "lie down," to "run," etc., etc. . . .

It had been all for the sake of war, and it was to war that we were going. My companion in exile, I mean my Barker, did not wish to part from me. Ashamed though I am, I must

yet call him "my true friend." Human beings as a rule forget favors rendered. This is the way God has made them. In very truth, it is only your soldier, your fellow in exile, and your dog that are able to serve you and love you at the risk of their own lives. I chased Barker away, but he kept on following me. I struck him: he took the blows, and licked my hands. I struck him over the legs with the stock of my gun. He broke out in a whine, and ran after me, limping. Marusya caught him and locked him up in the stable. I thought I had gotten rid of him. But some hours later I saw him limping after me. Then I realized that the dog was fated to share all the troubles of campaign life with me. And my Barker became a highly respectable dog. The first day he eyed everybody with a look of suspicion. The bright buttons and the blue uniforms scared him; possibly because buttons and uni-

forms went with stocks of guns like the one that had given him the lame leg. By and by Barker picked me and Jacob out from among the soldiers, and kept near us. They used to say in our company that Barker was a particular friend of Jews, and he knew a Jew when he saw one. Very likely that was so. But then they never knew how many slices of bread and meat Barker had gotten from Jewish hands before he knew the difference.

Just about that time we got other new companions. One of them was a certain Pole, Vassil Stefanovich Zagrúbsky, blessed be his memory, Jew-hater though he was.

The beginning of our acquaintance promised no good. That particular Pole was poor but proud—a poor fellow with many wants. Then he was a smoker, too. I also enjoyed a smoke when I had an extra copper in my pocket. But Zagrúbsky had a passion for smoking, and

when he had no tobacco of his own, he demanded it of others. That was his way: he could not beg; he could only demand. Three of us shared one tent: Zagrúbsky, Serge, and myself. Serge was a soldier in comfortable circumstances. He had taken some money with him from home, and received a monthly allowance from his parents. He always had excellent tobacco. Once, when he happened to open his tobacco pouch to roll a cigarette, Zagrúbsky took notice of it, and put forth his hand to take some tobacco. That was his way: whenever he saw a tobacco pouch open, he would try to help himself to some of its contents. But Serge was one of those peasants whose ambition extends beyond their class. He was painfully proud, prouder than any of the nobles. Before entering the service he had made up his mind to "rise." He wanted to become an officer, so that the villagers would have to

stand at attention before him when he returned home. Therefore he gave Zagrúbsky a supercilious look of contempt, and unceremoniously closed the pouch when the Pole wanted to take some tobacco. I was sorry for the Pole, and offered him some of my own tobacco. He did not fail to take it, but at the same time I heard him sizzle out "Zhid" from between his tightly closed lips. I looked at him in amazement: how on earth could he guess I was a Jew, when I spoke my Russian with the right accent and inflection, while his was lame, broken, and half mixed with Polish? That was a riddle to me. But I had no time to puzzle it out, and I forgot it on the spot.

We had long been occupying the same position, waiting for a merry beginning. All that time seemed to us something like a preparation for a holiday; but the long tiresome wait was disgusting. In the meantime something

extraordinary happened in our camp. Our camp was surrounded by a cordon of sentries. At some distance from the cordon was the camp of the purveyors, the merchants who supplied the soldiers with all kinds of necessaries. Without a special permit no purveyor could pass the line of sentries and enter the camp.

It happened that one of those purveyors excited the suspicion of Jacob. Without really knowing why, Jacob came to consider him a suspicious character. Even Barker, timid dog that he was, once viciously attacked that particular man, as if to tear him to pieces. And it was with great difficulty that Jacob saved him from Barker's teeth. But from that time on Jacob began to watch the man closely. That very day we were told that General Luders was going to visit our camp. Jacob was doing sentry duty. Just then the suspicious purveyor

appeared suddenly, as if he had sprung out of the ground. Jacob had his eye on him. Presently Jacob noticed that the fellow was hiding behind a bank of earth; he saw him take out a pistol from his pocket and aim it somewhere into space. That very moment General Luders appeared on the grounds. Without thinking much, Jacob aimed his gun at the purveyor and shot him dead. On investigation it turned out that the purveyor was a Pole, who had smuggled himself into the camp in order to assassinate the General.

Then they began to gossip in the regiment about Jacob's "rising." General Luders patted him on the shoulder, and said, "Bravo, officer!"

A few days later I met Jacob: he looked pale and worn out. His smile was more like the frozen smile of the agony of death. I told him I had dreamt he was drowning in a river

of oil. Then he told me confidentially that he had promised his superiors to renounce his faith.

Well, in the long run, it appeared that there was much truth in Jacob's idea, that a Jew in exile must not accept favors from Gentiles. And the temptation to which Jacob had been exposed was certainly much harder to stand than a thousand lashes, or even, for that matter, the whole bitter life of a Cantonist. The pity of it!

A few days later Zagrúbsky was appointed to serve Jacob. But when Zagrúbsky reported for duty, Jacob dismissed him. It was against Jacob's nature to have others do for him what he could do himself.

Zagrúbsky departed, hissing "Zhid" under his breath. It was the way he had treated me. My patience was gone. I put myself in his way, stopped him, and asked him: "Now

listen, you Pollack, how do you come to find out so quickly who is a Jew, and who is not? As far as I can see, you cannot speak Russian correctly yourself: why, then, do you spy on others? I have not yet forgotten that it was on account of my tobacco that you recognized I was a Zhid, too."

"O, that is all very simple," said he. "I never saw such lickspittles as the Jews are. They are always ready to oblige others with their favors and refuse honors due to themselves. That is why the authorities favor them so much. Do you wish to know what a Jew is? A Jew is a spendthrift, a liar, a whip-kisser, a sneak. He likes to be trampled on much more than others like to trample on him. He makes a slave of himself in order to be able to enslave everybody else. I hate the Jews, especially those from whom I ever get any favors."

Well, by this time I am ready myself to agree

with many of the Pole's assertions. The Jew is very lavish in his dealings with Gentiles. He is subservient, and always ready to give up what is his due. All that is a puzzle to the Gentiles, and every Jew who has been brought up and educated among them knows that as well as I do. Sometimes they have a queer explanation for it. A Gentile who has ever tasted of Jewish kindness and unselfishness will say to himself, " Very likely the Jew feels that he owes me much more."

To be brief: Zagrúbsky and I became very much attached to each other. But we never tried to disguise our feelings. I knew he was my enemy, and he knew that I was repaying him in kind, with open enmity. That was just what Zagrúbsky liked. We loved our mutual cordial hatred. When one feels like giving vent to his feelings, like hating, cursing, or detesting somebody or something, one's enemy becomes dearer than a hundred friends.

Then there came a certain day, and that day brought us close together for a moment, closer than we should ever be again. It happened at night cursed be that night! swallowed up the following day!

We soldiers had long become tired of our drill and our manœuvres; we got tired of "attacking" under the feint of a "retreat," and of "retreating" under the feint of an "attack." We were disgusted with standing in line and discharging our guns into the air, without ever seeing the enemy. In our days a soldier hated feints and make-believes. "Get at your enemy and crush his head, or lie down yourself a crushed 'cadaver'"—that was our way of fighting, and that was the way we won victories. As our general used to say: "The bullet is a blind fool, but the bayonet is the real thing."

At last, at last, we heard the quick, nervous notes of the bugle, and the hurried beats of the

drum, the same we used to hear year in, year out. But till that moment it was all "make-believe" drill. It was like what we mean by the passage in the Passover Haggodah: "Any one who is in need may come, and partake of the Passah-lamb. . . ." Till that moment we used to attack the air with our bayonets and pierce space right and left, "as if" the enemy had been before us, ready for our steel. We were accustomed to pierce and to vanquish the air and spirits, and that is all. At the same time there was something wonderful, sweet, and terrible in those blasts of the bugle, something that was the very secret of soldiery, something that went right into our souls when we returned home from our drill. . . .

But on that day it was not drill any more, and not make-believe any more, no! Before us was the real enemy, looking into our very eyes and thirsting for our blood.

Then, just for a moment, I thought of myself, of my own flesh, which was not made proof against the sharp steel. I remembered that I had many an account to settle in this world; that I had started many a thing and had not finished it; and that there was much more to start. I thought of my own enemies, whom I had not harmed as yet. I thought of my friends, to whom I had so far done no good. In short, I thought I was just in the middle of my lifework, and that the proper moment to die had not yet come. But all that came as a mere flash. For in the line of battle my own self was dissolved, as it were, and was lost, just like the selves of all who were there. I became a new creature with new feelings and a new consciousness. But the thing cannot be described: one has to be a soldier and stand in the line of battle to feel it. You may say, if you like, that I believe that the angel-pro-

tectors of warring nations descend from on high, and in the hour of battle enter as new souls into the soldiers of the line.

Then and there an end came also to the vicissitudes of my Barker. I found him dead, stretched out at full length on a bank of earth, which was the monument over the grave of the heroes of the first day's fighting. In the morning they all went to battle in the full flowering of strength and thirsty for victory, only to be dragged down at night into that hole, to be buried there. Well, the earth knows no distinction between one race and another; its worms feed alike on Jew and Gentile. But there, in Heaven, they surely know the difference between one soul and another, and each one is sent to its appointed place.

I was told that Jacob was among those buried in the common grave. Quite likely. I whispered a Kaddish over the grave, giving it the benefit of the doubt.

Of course, I was not foolish enough to cry over the cadaver of a dog; and yet it was a pity. After all, it was a living creature, too; it had shared all kinds of things with me: exile, hunger, rations, blows. And it had loved me, too. . . .

The next morning we were out again. In a moment line faced line, man faced man, enemy faced enemy. It was a mutual murderous attraction, a bloodthirsty love, a desire to embrace and to kill.

It was very much like the pull I felt towards Marusya.

. . . . Lightning. . . . shots. . . . thunder. . . . The talk of the angel-protectors it is. Snakes of fire flying upward, spreading out shrapnel bombs a-bursting soldiers standing reeling falling crushed, or lapping their own

blood. . . . Thinning lines breast to breast. . . . Hellish howls over the field. . . .

Crashing comes the Russian music, drowning all that hellish chorus, pouring vigor, might, and hope into the hearts of men. . . .

Alas, the music breaks off. . . . Where is the bugle? The trumpet is silenced. . . . The trombone breaks off in the middle of a note. . . . Only one horn is left. . . . Higher and higher rise its ringing blasts, chanting, as it were, " Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me! "

In mighty embrace men clasp one another. . . . Stabbing, being stabbed killing, being killed. . . .

I work away right and left, I expect my death-blow every moment, but I seem to be charmed: swords and bayonets surround me, but never touch me. . . .

Yes, it was a critical moment; it could not last much longer; one side had to give way.

But the Russians could not retreat, because in their very midst the priest was standing, the ikon of the Virgin in one hand and the crucifix in the other.

The soldiers looked at the images, got up new courage, and did wonders.

Do you remember the Biblical story of the brazen serpent? That was just like it.

Well, a bullet came flying, whistling, through the air, and the priest fell. Then the ikon and the crucifix began to wobble this way and that way, and fell down, too. The soldiers saw it, lost heart, and wanted to run.

At that moment I felt as if I were made of three different men.

Just imagine: Samuel the individual, Samuel the soldier, and Samuel the Jew.

Says Samuel the individual: "You have

done well enough, and it is all over now. Run for dear life."

Says Samuel the soldier: "Shame on you, where is your bravery? The regimental images are falling. Try, perhaps they may be saved yet."

Says Samuel the Jew: "Of course, save; for a Jew must ever do more than is expected of him."

But Samuel the individual replies: "Do you remember how many lashes you have suffered on account of these very images?"

Says Samuel the Jew again: "Do you know what these images are, and to what race they belong?"

Many such thoughts flashed through my brain; but it was all in a moment. And in a moment I was at the side of the priest. He was alive; he was wounded only in his hand. I raised him to his feet, put the images into his hands, lifted them up, and supported them.

"This way, Russians!"

I do not know who shouted these words. Perhaps I did; perhaps some one else; perhaps it was from Heaven.

However, the victory was ours.

But I did not remain on my feet a long time; a bullet struck me, and I fell.

What happened then, I cannot tell. All I know is that I dreamt something very agreeable: I was a little boy again, hanging on to my father's coat-tails, and standing beside him in the Klaus on a Yom-Kippur eve, during the most tearful prayers, and a mischievous little boy began to play with me, pricking my leg with a needle every now and then. . . .

When I came to my senses, I found myself in a sea of howls, groans, and cries, which seemed to be issuing from the very depths of the earth. For a moment I thought I was in purgatory, among the sinners who undergo

punishment. But pretty soon I recognized everything. I turned my head, and saw Zagrúbsky lying near me, wounded and groaning. He looked at me, and there was love and hatred mixed in that look. "Zhid," said he, with his last breath, and gave up the ghost.

Rest in peace, thou beloved enemy of mine!

From behind I heard someone groaning and moaning; but the voice sounded full and strong. I turned my head in the direction of the voice, and I saw that Serge Ivánovich was lying on his side and moaning. He looked around, stood up for a while, and lay down again. This manœuvre he repeated several times in succession. You see, the rascal was scheming to his own advantage. He knew very well that in the end he would have to fall down and groan for good. So he thought it was much cheaper and wiser to do it of his own free will, than to wait for something to throw him down.

The scamp had seen what I had done before I fell. A thought came to him. He helped me to my feet, bandaged my wound, and said:

"Now listen, Samuel: you have certainly done a very great thing; but it is worth nothing to you personally. Nay, worse: they might again try to make you renounce your faith. So it is really a danger to you. But, if you wish, just say that I have done it, and I shall repay you handsomely for it. The priest will not know the difference."

Well, it is this way: I always hated get-rich-quick schemes. I never cared a rap for a penny I had not expected and was not ready to earn. Take, for instance, what I did with the priest: Did I ever expect any honors or profits out of it? Such possible honors and profits I certainly did not like, and did not look for. Besides, who could assure me that they would not try again to coax me into renouncing

my faith? Why, then, should I put myself into such trouble? And I said to Serge:

"You want it badly, Serge, do you? You'd like to see yourself promoted, to be an officer? Is that so? Very well, then. Make out a paper assigning the house to Marusya."

"I promise faithfully."

"I believe no promises."

"What shall I do?"

"You have paper and pencil in your pocket?"

"Certainly!"

I turned around, supported myself on both my arms and one knee, and made a sort of a rickety table of myself. And on my back Serge wrote out his paper, and signed it. But all that was really unnecessary. He would have kept his word anyway. For he was always afraid I might blurt out the whole story. Not

I, though. May I never have anything in common with those who profit by falsehoods!

As to what happened later, I cannot tell you exactly. For I was taken away, first to a temporary hospital, and then to a permanent one. I fell into a fever, and lost consciousness. I do not know how many days or weeks passed by: I was in a different world all that time. How can I describe it to you? Well, it was a world of chaos. It was all jumbled together: father, mother, military service, ikons, lashes, lambs slaughtered, Peter, bullets, etc., etc.

It was all in a jumble, all topsyturvy. And in the midst of that chaos I felt as if I were a thing apart from myself. My head ached, and yet it felt as if it did not belong to me. . . . Finally I thought I felt mother bathing me; a delicious feeling of moisture spread over my flesh, and my headache disappeared. Then I

felt a warm, soft hand pass over my forehead, cheeks, and neck. . . .

I opened my eyes, the first time since I lost consciousness, and I exclaimed:

"Marusya!?"

"Yes, yes," said she, with a smile, while her eyes brimmed with tears, "it is I." And behind her was another face:

"Anna?!"

"Rest, rest," said they, warningly. "Thanks to God, the crisis is over."

I doubted, I thought it was all a dream. But it was no dream. It was all very simple: Anna and Marusya had enlisted and were serving as volunteer nurses at the military hospital, and I had known nothing of it.

"Marusya," said I, "please tell me how do I happen to be here?"

Then she began to tell me how they brought me there, and took me down from the wagon

as insensible as a log. But she could not finish her story; she began to choke with tears, and Anna finished what Marusya wanted to tell me.

I turned to Marusya:

"Where are my clothes?"

"What do you want them for?"

"There is a paper there."

I insisted, and she brought the paper.

"Read the paper, Marusya," said I. She read the document in which Serge assigned the house to Marusya. The two women looked at me with glad surprise.

"How did you ever get it?"

But I had decided to keep the thing a secret from them, and I did.

When I was discharged from the hospital, the war was long over, and a treaty of peace had been signed. Had they asked me, I should not have signed it.—

XIII

Here the old man stopped for a while. Apparently he skipped many an incident, and omitted many a thing that he did not care to mention. I saw he was touching upon them mentally. He resumed:—

Just so, just so. . . . Many, many a thing may take place within us, without our ever knowing it. I never suspected that I had been longing to see my parents. I never wrote to them, simply because I had never learned to write my Jewish well enough. Of course, had my brother Solomon been taken, he would surely have written regularly, for he was a great penman, may he rest in peace. As to Russian, I certainly might have written in that language; but then it would have been very much like offering salt water to a thirsty person. And that is why I did not write. I thought I had

forgotten my parents. But no! Even that was merely a matter of habit. I had gotten so used to my feeling of longing that I was not aware of having it. That is the way I explain it to myself. By and by there opened in my heart a dark little corner that had been closed for many a year. That was the longing for my parents, for my home, mixed with just a trace of anger and resentment. I began to picture to myself how my folks would meet me: there would be kisses, embraces, tears, neighbors. . . . For, like a silly child, I imagined they were all alive and well yet, and that the Angel of Death would wait till I came and repaid them for all the worry I had caused them. . . . And, indeed, would they not have been greatly wronged, had they been allowed to die unconsoled, after they had rent Heaven with their prayers and lamentations?

But the nearer I came to my native town,

the less grew my desire to see it. A feeling of estrangement crept over me at the sight of the neighborhood. No, it was not exactly a feeling of estrangement, but some other feeling, something akin to what we feel at the recollection of the pain caused by long-forgotten troubles. I can hardly make it clear to you; it was not unlike what an old man feels after a bad dream of the days of his youth.

It was about this time of the year. The roads were just as bad as now, the slush just as deep. And it was as nauseating to sit in the coach only to watch the glittering mud and count the slow steps of the horses. In a season like this it is certainly much more agreeable to dismount and walk. That was just what I did. My native town was not far away: only once uphill, once downhill, and there was the inevitable cemetery, which must be passed when one enters a Jewish village. The horses could

hardly move, and I overtook them very soon, as I took a short cut, and struck into a path across the peasants' fields. I allowed myself that privilege, because at that time I was still wearing my uniform with the brass buttons shining brightly. When I descended into the valley, I decided to cross the cemetery, and so shorten my way. The coach was far behind, and I was walking very slowly, that it might reach me at the other side of the cemetery. My path lay among the gravestones, some of them gray with age, dilapidated, bent forward, as if trying to overhear the talk of the nether world: some clean and upright, as if gazing proudly heavenwards. It was a world of silence I was in; and heavy indeed is the silence of the graveyard: it is really a speaking silence. I think there is something real in the belief that the dead talk in their graves. To me it seemed as if the gravestones were casting evil glances at me

for my having disturbed the silent place with the glitter of my buttons. And it was with difficulty that I could decipher the inscriptions on the stones. I do not know why it was so: either my Hebrew had got rusty, or else graveyard inscriptions make hard reading in general.

"Here lieth the righteous man modest, pious Rabbi Simhah Shohet. . . . "

I read it all, and shuddered: why, under that very stone lay the remains of my own brother Simhah!

I wanted to shed tears, but my tears did not obey me. I read it again and again, and when I came to the words "modest," "pious," I mumbled something to myself, something angry and envious. Then I thought I felt the tombstone move, the ground shake under me, as if a shiver were passing through the air. . .

"Forgive me, forgive me!"

It was not my ears that caught those words; it was my heart. I understood that it was the soul of my brother apologizing to me for the action of my parents. Tears began to flow from my eyes. I did not care to read any further, from fear of finding something I did not wish to find. I was thinking of my parents.

And when I entered the house of my parents, I could hardly recognize them. Wrinkled, bent, with sunken cheeks, they had changed entirely in appearance.

Father looked at my buttons, removed his cap, and stood bent before me. Mother was busying herself at the oven, and began to speak to father in a mixture of Hebrew and Yiddish: "Sure enough, some sort of taxes again. . . . Much do we need it now. . . ." Then, in a fit of spitefulness, I made believe I was a stranger.

"Old people," said I, "I have brought you

news from your son Samuel." As soon as father heard me speak Yiddish, he ran to the window, rubbed his hands against the moist pane, by way of washing them, and shook hands with me.

"Peace be with you, young man," said he. Mother left her corner and stood up before me. Father began fumbling for his glasses, and asked me: "News from my son, you say? Where did you see him last?"

"And when did you see him?" asked mother, shivering.

I mentioned some imaginary place and date.

"How does he feel? Was he in the war? Is he well? Does he expect to come home?"

Many such questions followed one another in quick succession. Meanwhile father took me aside, and whispered into my ear: "How about how about religion?" Out of sheer spitefulness I wanted to worry the poor

old folks a little; may the Lord not consider it a sin on my part.

I said: "Had Rabbi Simhah the Shohet been in his place, he surely would have withstood all temptations!"

"What, converted?!"

I kept silent, and the old people took it as a sign of affirmation.

They hung their heads despondently, and kept silent, too. Then father asked me once more:

"Married a Gentile? Has children?" I still kept silent. My old mother wept quietly. My heart melted within me, but I braced myself up and kept silent. I felt as if a lump in my throat was choking me, but I swallowed it. I heard mother talking to herself: "O Master of the Universe, Father who art in Heaven, Thou Merciful and Righteous!" As she said it, she shook her head, as if accepting

God's verdict and complaining at the same time.

The old man stood up, his beard a-quiver. His hand shook nervously, and he said in a tone of dry, cold despair:

"Ett. . . . Blessed be the righteous Judge!" as though I had told him the news of his son's death. With that he took out a pocket knife, and wanted to make the "mourning cut." At that moment my ear caught the sound of the heartrending singsong of the Psalms. The voice was old and tremulous. It was an old man, evidently a lodger, who was reading his Psalter in an adjoining room:

"For the Lord knoweth the path of the righteous. . . ."

The memories of the long past overtook me, and I told my parents who I was.

And yet—continued Samuel after some thought—and yet they were not at peace, fear-

ing I had deceived them. And they never rested till they got me married to my Rebekah, "according to the law of Moses and Israel."

Well, two years passed after my wedding, and troubles began; I got a toothache, may you be spared the pain! That is the way of the Jew: no sooner does he wed a woman and beget children, than all kinds of ills come upon him.

Some one told me, there was a nurse at the city hospital who knew how to treat aching teeth and all kinds of ills better than a full-fledged doctor.

I went to the hospital, and asked for the nurse.

A young woman came out. . . .

"Marusya?!"

"Samuel?!"

We were both taken aback.

"And where is your husband, Marusya?" asked I, after I had caught my breath.

"And you, Samuel, are you married?"

"Yes."

"But I am single yet."

Yes, yes, she was a good soul! She died long ago. . . . May it please the Lord to give her a goodly portion in Paradise!—

Here the old man broke off his story with a deep sigh escaping from his breast.

He waved his hand at his son, who was dozing away unconcerned, lurching from side to side. The old man looked at his son, shook his head, and said:

"Yes, yes, those were times, those were soldiers. . . . It is all different now: new times, new people, new soldiers. . . .

"It is all make-believe nowadays! "

NOTES

BY THE TRANSLATOR

AV. The month in the Jewish calendar corresponding to July-August. On the ninth day of Av the Temple was taken and destroyed by Titus.

ARBA-KANFOS. Literally, "four corners." A rectangular piece of cloth about one foot wide and three feet long, with an aperture in the middle large enough to pass it over the head. The front part of the garment falls over the chest, the other part covers the shoulders. To its four corners "Tzitzis," or fringes, are attached in prescribed manner. When made of wool, the Arba-Kanfos is usually called TALLIS-KOTON (which see).

BAR-MITZWAH. Literally, "man of duty." A Jewish boy who has passed his thirteenth birthday, and has thus attained his religious majority.

BEADLE. The functions of this officer in a Jewish community were somewhat similar to those of the constable in some American villages.

CANDLES. The Sabbath is ushered in by lighting the Sabbath candles, accompanied by a short prayer.

CANTONISTS. A term applied to Jewish boys drafted into military service during the reign of Nicholas I of Russia (1825-1855). Every Jewish community had to supply its quota;

but as parents did not surrender their children willingly, they were secured by kidnappers specially appointed by the Community for the purpose. See CATCHER. The same term was applied to the children of Russian soldiers who were educated for the army in the so-called District, or Canton, Schools. Hence the name.

CATCHER. An agent of the Jewish Community prior to the introduction, in 1874, of general military duty in Russia.

HAVDOLAH. Ceremonial with wine, candle, and spices, accompanied by a prayer, at the end of the Sabbath.

HAGGODAH. The ritual used at the Passover eve home service.

HALLAH. In commemoration of the priest's tithe at the time of the Temple. The ceremonial consists of taking a piece of the bread dough before it is baked and throwing it into the fire; a prayer is recited at the same time.

HEDER. Literally, "a room." Specifically, a school in which Bible and Talmud are taught.

KADDISH. Literally, "sanctification." A prayer recited in commemoration of the dead.

KARAITES. Members of a Jewish sect that does not recognize the authority of the Talmud.

KOSHER. Literally, "right," "fit." Specifically applied to food prepared in accordance with the Jewish dietary laws.

KLAUS. A synagogue to which students of the Talmud resort for study and discussion.

LAMDAN. A scholar learned in the Torah.

MEZUZAH. Literally, "doorpost." A piece of parchment, inscribed with the SHEMA (which see), to-

gether with Deut. 11:13-21, rolled up, and enclosed in an oblong box, which is attached in a prescribed way to the door-post of a dwelling.

MODEH-ANI. Literally, "I affirm." The opening words of a brief confession of faith.

SHAATNEZ. Cloth or a garment made of linen and wool woven together; or a wool garment sewed with linen thread; or a linen garment sewed with wool.

SHEMA. Literally, "listen." The opening words of Deut. 6:4-9.

SHEMAD. Literally, "extermination." Applied figuratively to renunciation of the Jewish faith, whether forced or voluntary.

SHOHET. A slaughterer of cattle licensed by a rabbi. He must examine the viscera of cattle according to the rules laid down in the Talmud.

TALLIS-KOTON. Literally, "the little Tallis," or prayer shawl. Worn by some Jews. See ARBA-KANFOS.

TORAH. Literally, "doctrine." A term applied to the Pentateuch, and to the Talmud with its commentaries.

TZITZIS. See ARBA-KANFOS.

YOM-KIPPUR. Day of Atonement.

ZHID (fem. Zhidóvka: zh sounded like z in azure). Literally, "Judean." Russian equivalent of English "sheeny."

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